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ABSTRACT

A study explored the nature of intake procedures of Texas adult education programs. Research on barriers to attendance and strategies for retention were reviewed, and the current use of intake procedures to identify and address barriers to attendance was summarized through a survey of 374 Literacy, Even Start Family Literacy, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and General Educational Development (GED) programs in Texas. The study found that respondents may not use the intake process to counter barriers to attendance as effectively as they could, and some current practices revealed in the study seem to be contributing to institutional barriers to attendance. The study revealed that there may be a need for future research into the areas of a dynamic intake approach, the use of the stop-out period, and the act of gathering intake data. (Contains 92 references.) (Author/KC)

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ED 443 982

INTAKE PROCEDURES AS A FACTOR IN IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE OF ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of
Southwest Texas State University
In Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts in Developmental and Adult Education

by

Judy Hafley Hubble, B. S.

J. H Hubble

San Marcos, Texas
2000

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by

Judy Hafley Hubble

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Jolinda, and to all the Student Support Staff at Central Texas College, Killeen, Texas. It is through their experience and wisdom that I came to see how taking an individual interest in each student can make the difference in a person's life. Jolinda, severely dyslexic, taught me that there is always a way around a disability. With her hard work and Student Support Services, she earned a Certificate in Child Development which enabled her to provide a living wage for her family. It is through her that I gained a burning desire to specialize in learning disabled adults, and to continue my own education at Southwest Texas State University.

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ABSTRACT

INTAKE PROCEDURES

AS A FACTOR IN IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING

BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE

OF ADULT EDUCATION STUDENTS

by

Judy Hafley Hubble, B. S.

Southwest Texas State University

2000

SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: Dr. Emily Miller Payne, Ed.D.

This thesis explores the nature of intake procedures of Texas Adult Education programs of study. Research on barriers to attendance and strategies for retention are reviewed. An overview of the current use of intake procedures to identify and address barriers to attendance is provided through the survey method of 374 Literacy, Even Start Family Literacy, ABE, and GED programs in Texas. It was found that respondents may not use the intake process to counter barriers to attendance as effectively as they could, and some current practices revealed in this study seem to be contributing to institutional barriers to attendance. The study revealed that there may be a need for future research into the areas of a dynamic intake approach, the use of the stop-out period, and the act of gathering intake data.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This research examined the issue of barriers to completion for Texas Adult Education programs serving students at the literacy level, Adult Basic Education (ABE) level, and Adult Secondary Level (ASE), who have the goal of obtaining a General Education Development certificate, often referred to as a GED. This research also reviewed the nature of current intake procedures in these programs, reviewed the use of intake data to counter barriers to attendance, and presents the results of a survey of intake procedures used in Texas Adult Education programs. This study focused on the nature of intake procedures and the extent to which those procedures allow program staff to identify and address barriers to attendance.

If people must compete in a global economy, survive in the expanding information age, and achieve Dewey's (1916) goal of possessing the capacity for educational growth, adults need a foundation of basic education. Each year Adult Education programs serve as the starting point towards this basic level for many adults who have had their education interrupted; however, less than half who begin studies attend until they complete the program (Kim & Collins, 1997). Program directors often try to find economical and efficient ways to counter barriers to attendance once students have started, especially for low level, or at-risk ABE students. Intake data

might be used to identify and address the types of barriers a student may encounter which might have an impact on retention.

Tracy-Mumford et al. (1994) believes that program administrators must be willing to incorporate retention strategies within existing programs, and to devote human and fiscal resources to the potential dropout, or at-risk ABE student, because these adult learners will leave a program if it does not meet their needs. The personal cost to a student to come to a program can be immense, and "when the cost of participation outweighs the benefits, education loses its priority in their [students'] lives" (Tracy-Mumford et al., p. 4). Compounding the barriers to attendance for Adult Education students is the unwillingness of the U. S. Congress to "commit funds that are commensurate to the magnitude of the problem" (Eurich, 1990, p. 232), even though they acknowledge the implications of a workforce that is educationally handicapped.

An historical review of funds for adult education services for 85 programs in 12 federal agencies FY1986 through FY1988, and 84 programs in 11 agencies FY1989 revealed that most monies for adult education come from the U. S. Department of Education funded under the Adult Education Act (Alamprese & Sivilli, 1992). Alamprese and Sivilli (1992) state that a "reliable calculation of these monies was impossible because of the lack of data reporting requirements...and the unavailability of data that have been collected" (p. 9). Alamprese and Sivilli's (1992) report uses estimates because oftentimes "monies allotted for adult education activities were not tracked separately for those that had been distributed through a grant, contract, or other

funding mechanism" (p. 13). They were able to show a trend of increased funding for these 84 Federal programs that include adult education during the four years covered by the study, i.e., compare $132,402,845 FY1986 to $247,090,059 FY1989 (Alamprese & Sivilli, 1992, p. 14). Alamprese and Sivilli (1992) announce this disclaimer several times in the study which reflects the complicated nature of adult education funding: "Federal programs authorizing multiple activities do not require that obligations or expenditures for adult education activities be reported separately, which has resulted in limited available data on adult education...and therefore, the amount of Federal funding spent on adult education can only be reliably verified as a low-end estimate" (p. 23).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) also shows a trend of increased funding for adult education programs in the form of grants to states; for example, in 1980 the amount was $153,724 compared to 1997 at $370,000 (Snyder, Hoffman, & Geddes, 1997, p. 403). However, Texas received only $99,930 in Federal funds in 1995 for Vocational and Adult Education programs which was allocated between Basic Grants to States, State Councils, Tech-Prep Education, Adult Education State Administered Basic Grant Programs, and State Literacy Resource Centers to serve 207,921 ABE and ASE students (Snyder, Hoffman, & Geddes, 1997, p. 404-406).

Eurich (1990) reported that while states have funded more programs than the federal government, they have historically under-invested in literacy education, producing a catch-up situation. Eurich (1990) also noted that basic education programs throughout the United States are characterized by small, under-funded programs implemented by part-time teachers, often under-educated in adult learning practices,

and volunteers directed by overlapping organizations that compete for funds based on completion statistics. "The adult education and training system is fragmented by the competing eligibility and performance requirements of multiple state and federal funding sources" (Brown, Gallaher & Harris, 1995, p. 2). Eurich (1990) holds little hope that adult basic education programs and funding will ever change from this situation. Quigley (1992a) feels that greater resources must be allocated to areas of greatest need Adult Basic Education students (ABE), and not by the most efficient completers, Adult Secondary Education students (ASE).

Adults will re-enter the education arena and persist in attaining goals only when they believe that education is a way out and up, and that their efforts will lead to a better position, as well as if they believe that they can learn what is required (Garrison 1997, Long 1992; Tracy-Mumford et al., 1994). Adults will persist in learning past the crucial "three week period" [two or three classes] if they feel that they are achieving success, and if they feel that they have the potential to continue to achieve success (Quigley, 1993, p. 1). Garrison places great importance on the level of a student's entering motivation, referred to as "motivation fuel" (p. 27), and feels effort and persistence during later stages of the learning process (task motivation) is influenced by entering motivation (1997). Garrison (1997) asserts that the motivation for continuing, or persisting, is reflected in a student's "perceived value and anticipated success of learning goals at the time learning is initiated" (p. 26). Garrison (1997) explains that Rubenson's expectancy-valence paradigm that deals with adult education recruitment practices influenced his belief of the importance of establishing high entering motivation

through valence (the attractiveness of a goal) and expectancy (assumption that achievement is possible). The initial establishment of a student's goals and the amount of control a student has over the learning process establishes entering motivation which is crucial to persistence (Garrison, 1997). The procedures used by a program to help a student develop his/her goals and type of learning process may become an institutional barrier to attendance. This, again, reinforces how crucial the intake procedures can be to addressing barriers to attendance which is reflected in Quigley's body of work (1987, 1992a, 1992b, 1993, 1995, 1997).

As with other lifestyle change initiatives, the critical time period for dropping out seems to be soon after a student's commitment to a program of study, and before significant gains in ability are achieved. This study assumed program staff may be successful in recruiting adult education students, overcoming situational barriers to attendance (i.e., transportation, child care), and yet have difficulty retaining students until they see the possibility of success, experience success, or realize the value of persistence which usually happens within the first three weeks of classes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of intake procedures in Texas Adult Education Programs (literacy, ABE, or ASE) and to determine to what extent they assist program staff to identify and address barriers to attendance for students with the goal of obtaining a GED certificate.

Research Questions

This study addressed two research questions (RQ) regarding the nature of intake procedures:

RQ 1 - What is the nature of intake procedures?

RQ 2 - How do the intake data identify and address barriers to attendance?

Operational Definitions

In order to determine the nature of intake procedures used by statewide programs and how their procedures might identify and address barriers to attendance for Adult Education students, definitions as used in this study are necessary. For the purpose of this study, terms below are used.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) - refers to the programs originating from mid-sixties legislation intended to help people aged 15 and over get the equivalent of an eighth-grade education (Eurich, 1990). The typical ABE student has a National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) score in the range of high 1, 2, or low 3 (National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992, p. 3).

Adult Education - in this study refers to instruction with the goal of the student obtaining a General Education Development certificate. Adult Education includes adults at the functional literacy level, ABE, or ASE level of instruction. In Texas, these students are usually served through adult education centers administered by cooperative agencies of ten to fifteen centers each (Payne et al., 1998). Family literacy

programs are often part of the Federal program including Even Start, whose philosophy is that as much as possible, the whole family should be included in literacy education (National Evaluation of the Even Start Family Literacy Program, 1998).

Adult Secondary Education (ASE) - refers to the 1969 expansion of the ABE program to help adults earn the high school equivalency diploma (Eurich, 1990). The typical ASE student has a NALS score in the range of high 3, 4, or 5 (National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992, p. 3).

At-risk ABE student - a term used by Quigley (1993) to identify those students who may drop out before completing their goals, usually within a three-week time period.

Class Setting - refers to placement of the student into group, individual, computer-based, or other instructional setting.

Delivery System - refers to curriculum transmittal decisions, i.e., oral, visual, direct teach instruction, prerecorded lessons, etc.

Direct Service Provider - refers to the person directly facilitating learning activities (not prerecorded or distance education).

Dispositional Barriers to Participation - reasons for non-attendance stemming from psychological, personality, attitude, beliefs about ability to learn (Sticht, McDonald & Erickson, 1998).

GED - General Educational Development (American Council on Education, 1998).

Institutional Barriers to Participation - reasons for non-attendance stemming from instructional methods, policies, practices, requirements of programs (Sticht, McDonald & Erickson, 1998).

Intake Procedures - refers to any action, spoken or written, that a program uses to introduce the program's policies, practices, or requirements for entry. Included in intake procedures are the methods used to establish a prospective student's academic or psycho-social level.

Literacy - is defined as "using printed and written information to function in society to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (National Literacy Act, Public Law 102-73, 1991). In this study, literacy refers to functioning in the English language.

National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) - This annual report to Congress on the "condition and progress of education" began in 1870 (National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992, p. 1). The current survey procedure determines the population's prose, document, and quantitative literacy abilities by their consistent success at an 80 percent criterion. The survey rates scores into five levels, or scales of literacy ability "ranging from 0 to 500" (National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992, p. 2).

NALS Scales - The levels that reflect survey participants' degree of literacy ability within prose, document, and quantitative tasks. The levels represents level cut points 50 points apart along the continuous scale of 0 to 500: Level 1 (0-225), Level 2 (225-275), Level 3 (275-325), Level 4 (325-375), Level 5 (375-500), (National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992, p. 3).

Retention and Completion rate - in this study means the proportion of students staying long enough to accomplish student oriented goals.

Situational Barriers to Participation - reasons for non-attendance stemming from childcare issues, conflicting work schedules, and lack of transportation (Sticht, McDonald & Erickson, 1998).

Stopping Out - in this study means a student not attending for a period of time and then returning at a later date to start again.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to adult education programs that serve students who are functionally literate in the English language, "competent to meet the requirements of adult living and working" (Eurich, 1990, p. 226), yet do not have a high school diploma and need to earn a GED certificate. This study is delimited to programs that serve voluntary adult education students. Students in the programs may be court-ordered to improve reading, or to obtain a GED certificate, but the programs are not in a prison setting, nor are they workplace only sites.

Significance of the Study

The 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) estimates that roughly 45% of the adult population tested has less than average in skills of prose, document, and quantitative proficiencies (Levels 1 and 2). A greater concern is the "21%- 23% of the

adult population, more than 40 million Americans over the age of 16, who performed at the lowest level of prose, document, and quantitative proficiencies (Level 1), which means that they had only rudimentary reading and writing skills" (Kirsch, Jungeblut, Jenkins & Kolstad, 1993, p. 7). Kirsch et al. (1993) reported that 40 million represents an improvement for 1992 from the 1985 NALS report by 10 to 11 points across the three scales, adding that, "this comparison was possible because the same definition of literacy was used in describing a common set of prose, document, and quantitative literacy tasks administered in both assessments" (p. 5). The NALS Report confirms that "nearly two-thirds of those in Level 1 (62 %) had terminated their education before completing high school" (Kirsch et al., 1993, p. 7). In a report ordered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) for the years 1994-5, the lowest level of proficiency included 31 million adults (Kim & Collins, 1997). Again, an improvement in the number scoring at the lowest level, but also illustrating the need for adult basic education programs, and for students to persist in those programs. It may be that intake data could be considered not only a mechanism for statistical information, but could become a means to increase persistence by designing intake questions that could alert staff to barriers to attendance. The role of the intake process could be the vital link between the needs of the students and countering barriers to attendance.

GED programs, which often encompass ABE and GED learners, are reported as serving only a small portion of those in need of adult education, estimated to be 3% to 7% (Reder, 1992; Sticht et al., 1998). The small proportion of eligible adults entering programs of study could be due to their not perceiving a need for a further education.

Of those who are being served, the persistence rate is typically 30%-50% nationwide (Kim & Collins, 1997). Some programs report a drop out rate as high as 60-70% (Quigley, 1992b, 1993, Kerka, 1995). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that credentials were issued to 513,000 GED to the 803,000 test takers in 1995 (Snyder, Hoffman, & Geddes, 1997, Table 102, p. 111).

Sticht et al. (1998) found that 17% leave before receiving any instruction, 36% leave before completing 12 hours of study, "and most leave their programs with too few hours of instruction to make them much more proficient than before" (p. 15). The San Diego Consortium for Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning, Inc. (CWELL) student action research study shows that situational barriers to attendance are the most difficult to overcome (48%) followed by dispositional barriers (36%), with institutional barriers (16%) mentioned as the least difficult (Sticht et al., 1998). Sticht et al. (1998) went beyond the statistics to conclude that "people's self-perceptions of need are better indicators of persistence than estimates of test scores" (p. 16). The need to retain those who have crossed the threshold to more education is apparent.

One group that is reported to be crossing over in greater number are the adolescent dropouts from public schools. NCES reports the national drop out rate in 1996 was 11.1% (Snyder et al., 1997, Table 103, p. 111). The 1997 Interim Report on Texas Public Schools reports total student drop out number in 1995-96 as 29,207 students, and 26,901 students in 1996-97 (Texas Education Agency, 1997, p. 17). The significance of public school dropouts could be indicated by the number of adult education participants in 1996-97 aged 16-24, 82,374 , out of a total served of 228,723

(TEA, Adult Education Performance Report, 1998, p. 14). The number of recruits from this sector for adult education programs is expected to increase.

However, for all age groups the number of students in Texas completing an adult high school diploma or passing the GED test in 1996-97 was only 15,473, although 207,755 report making progress or moving up in their functioning level (TEA, Adult Education Performance Report, 1998, p. 18). These numbers show a significant group of students did not obtain a GED during the year they began their studies.

In comments about completion statistics, Beder (1991) stated that the workplace demands and environmental demands for literacy will continue to increase rapidly, and literacy program approaches and settings must be constantly reviewed and developed so that students can succeed with this difficult endeavor. The cost of 40 million Americans falling in Level 1 and 50 million in Level 2 of the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS, 1992) not only affects the United States' economic position, it is a "deficit in human resources that requires remedy...for the sake of our future well-being as a society" (Eurich, 1990, p. 228).

As daunting a task as completing a GED is for low functioning adults, the General Education Development Testing Service recently put new demands on GED candidates (American Council on Education, 1998). In April of 1998, the Specifications Committee upgraded the level of competence needed to pass the tests, reorganized some of the tests, and changed criteria needed to pass the mathematical portion, after raising the level of score needed to pass in 1997. Additionally, the Testing Service decided that as of January 1, 2001, whichever test a student has passed will be voided if he/she has

not finished the complete battery of tests (American Council on Education, 1998). They will not allow a mixing of old and new test scores. This decision has some program directors concerned about the retention rates for low level reading students who must move up in their reading ability before they can even attempt a GED test.

A number of situational, dispositional, or institutional barriers to attendance can possibly be addressed at intake and the efforts made to create a usable, fluid intake process are relevant to increasing retention. Well-planned intake interactions can possibly enhance recognition of potential barriers and allow timely implementation of intervention strategies. Screening procedures can place a student on the correct path to completion, or might become another negative association with organized education. The research on the nature of intake procedures and the degree to which intake data address barriers to attendance contained in this study may be useful for literacy, ABE, and/or GED providers. This research may benefit program directors who want to better utilize their intake data. Possible users of this data are ABE/GED Centers, Evenstart Programs, Literacy Providers, High School Alternative Education programs, Workplace Literacy Providers, and Teacher Education Providers.

Summary

This chapter investigated the need for an educated workforce, the funding for adult education programs, and the state of education levels in America. Literature was reviewed concerning the impact of the number of Americans in the lowest levels of

functioning on the NALS (1992) report, and the significance of the lack of achievement of these ABE students. Research was previewed regarding the importance of retention efforts and certain studies were highlighted that have shown how crucial the intake period is for these students. The purpose of the study was outlined, research questions were delineated, and operational definitions were given.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a range of causes of retention problems for Adult Education students. Retention statistics at the national and state levels reveal that retaining a student long enough to earn a GED certificate is difficult, and retaining ABE students, often referred to as at-risk or high-risk students, through a program is even more difficult. A review of literature highlights the exchange of data during intake procedures used to identify different barriers to attendance in successful programs. Retention practices were studied with an emphasis on students with initial NALS Levels of high 1, 2, and low 3. After examining the range of causes for retention problems, this study examined the use of intake data to reveal potential barriers to attendance, and the use of intake data to respond to those barriers.

Range of Causes for Retention Problems

Providers of adult education face difficult operating conditions due to funding agency differences, conflicting mandates, and community demands (Brown et al., 1995). The continued need for adult education was confirmed in the 1992 NALS Report which placed 21% to 23%, some 40 to 44 million of the 191 million adults in this country, at the lowest level of proficiency. There were 25% to 28%, about 50 million adults, in the

next higher level. Roughly 45% of the adult population performed at less than average levels in skills of prose, document, and quantitative proficiencies which was comprised of the categories low Level 1, 2, and high 3. The NALS Report (1992) stated that "nearly two-thirds of those in Level 1 (62 percent) had terminated their education before completing high school" (p. 7). It is reasonable to expect that the majority of Level 1 students are the least prepared to enter a GED program of study.

The research literature suggests that Literacy and ABE/GED programs serve a small proportion of those in need of adult education, with estimates ranging from 3-7% (Reder, 1992). Of those who are being served, the completion rate is typically 30-50% resulting in a 50-70% drop out rate (Kim & Collins, 1997). Other researchers report a drop out rate as high as 60-70% as well (Kerka, 1995, Quigley, 1992b, 1993). Comparatively, the Texas public university student drop out rate ranges between 31-34% since tracking began in 1985 with the most common factor listed for drop outs as students not being well-prepared for college studies (TEA, Higher Education in Texas: 1998 Status Report, 1999c). Barriers to attendance appear to exist in all levels of education and impact retention rates for all programs of study. Persistence rates might increase if program staff could use the intake data to reveal possible barriers so that a response could be initiated at intake.

The Texas Adult Education Annual Performance Report for year 1996-1997 (1998) summarized demographic characteristics of the population that this study is concerned with as Beginning and Intermediate ABE students (p. 1). Of the 228,723 students reported as starting a program of study, 80,146 students were categorized as

ABE students. Of those 80,146 students, 31,563 completed the entering level of study, 41,185 were in the same level at year-end, 7,398 left before making progress, and 16,760 moved to the next higher level of study (Texas Education Agency, Annual Performance Report 96-97, 1998, p. 16). The report indicated that 15,473 students obtained an adult high school diploma or passed the GED test during 1996-1997, but the data do not reflect how many of these students were ABE students when they started (TEA, 1998, p. 18).

Cohen, Golonka, Ooms, and Owen (1995) refer to current programs for adult education as a "patchwork: disorganized, poorly funded; failing to produce gains, and failing to address other barriers to...success" (p. 8). Texas Adult Education programs fund $85.00 per student per year (TEA, 1998, p. 2) which could be a factor in low completion and retention rates. Texas programs rely on 3,611 part-time personnel, 338 full-time personnel (106 are teachers), and 2,509 volunteers to administer and teach the 228,723 students in 1996-1997 (TEA, 1998, p. 22).

Adding to these problems is often the issue of retaining ABE students until progress to the next level of functioning is reached, or until a student completes his/her GED. Research by Daines (1993) reported the majority of reasons for dropping out were attributed to personal causes, course expectations, mismatch of tutor and/or material, although some declined to indicate a reason. Reasons for dropping out or barriers to attendance have been categorized by Cross (as cited in Sticht, McDonald, & Erickson, 1998) as either situational (child-care, work, transportation), dispositional (psycho- logical, personality, attitude, ability to learn perceptions), or institutional

(method of instruction, policies, program requirements). One study organized around Cross' categories found student self-reports for causes of non-attendance as reliable as those in similar research studies, rating situational barriers as the most often cited reason, dispositional next, and institutional last (Sticht et al., 1998). The combination of a fluid, usable intake process to reveal possible barriers and careful consideration of student self-reports for reasons for non-attendance might facilitate effective program design and higher retention rates.

The Texas Education Agency conducted a Student Evaluation of Adult Education Survey of its adult students (ABE, GED, ESL), and in FY 1997 was able to gather 37,975 student-completed exit questionnaires from the 228,723 students enrolled. ABE student responses numbered 28% (10,633) (TEA, 1998, p. 30-31). The twenty-four question evaluation included twelve items that were concerned with barriers to attendance: dispositional barriers (3) and institutional barriers (9) (TEA, 1998, p. 31-32).

If they know a student is exiting the program, Texas program directors routinely ask exiting students to complete a form called the "Reason for Separation" questionnaire which is included in their Annual Performance Report data. Students have ten categories to choose from as the reason for separation. In the 1997 year-end report (TEA, 1998, p. 21), six exit interview categories could be considered as reflecting situational barriers to attending: health problems, child care problems, transportation problems, family problems, left area, took a job, (23,511 responses). One category could be considered a dispositional barrier: lack of interest, or instruction not helpful to participant (3,112 responses). Two categories could be considered institutional

barriers: location of class and scheduled time of class (12,376 responses) (TEA, 1998, p. 21). Often the staff is not aware that a student will be exiting the program; the student just stops attending. It is cost prohibitive to mail an exit questionnaire with return postage to students. In these cases, after a period of time determined by each site, staff will complete the "Reason for Separation" form for the student marking the category called "other" which contains the box "unknown," and this category comprises 15,220 responses (TEA, 1998, p. 21).

Situational Barriers

Those responsibilities and life issues that become barriers to attending a program of study are called situational barriers and are often identified at the intake period. Included in this category are transportation issues, conflicting work schedules, obtaining a job, and baby-sitting problems (Sticht et al., 1998). Kerka (1988) suggests organizing a program around the needs of the majority of attendees. If the majority come from a particular neighborhood, the center needs to be housed in that neighborhood, easily accessible by public transportation. If the majority have child care issues, those have to be dealt with by the center, either by providing it or coordinating a car pool program (Kerka, 1988). The literature reveals that these same problems create situational barriers for current programs, but it was shown that program staff that provided support in these areas tended to retain students more effectively (Soifer et al., 1990).

Dispositional Barriers

Cross (as cited in Sticht et al., 1998) defines dispositional barriers as those that "stem from the psychological, personality, and attitudinal make-up of the student, and their beliefs about their abilities to learn" (p. 20).

Many researchers have found that at-risk ABE students have shared affective attributes towards learning which manifest themselves as dispositional barriers to attendance (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992; Guisier & Molek, 1992; Marshall, 1992). Quigley's (1993) study of personality traits among at-risk ABE students listed the need to belong, need for peer acceptance, and low-self-esteem as common attributes. Cohen's (1997) work on transformative learning found that people often have a "distorted idea of their personal inadequacy...their test score often becoming their self-image" (p. 61-2). Thiel (1985) described the characteristics of public school drop outs in 1984, and fourteen years later, these characteristics resemble the adult at-risk ABE students of today: "...poor social adjustment, inability to relate to authority figures, lack of future orientation, inability to tolerate structured activities, battered self-image, fear of taking risks, and deficient in skills needed for survival in today's technological society" (p. 3). Quigley (1992a, 1993) asserted that similar characteristic behaviors and attitudes persist into adulthood, and if program staff do not acknowledge or possibly address these past needs, then this could be a factor in the high drop out rates of ABE students.

Just as they were often alienated from peers and teachers in prior school settings, at-risk ABE students are often socially isolated in adult programs (Thiel, 1985; Vann & Hinton, 1994). At-risk ABE students may lack the self-confidence to join either

formal or informal support groups which might help them to persist. At-risk ABE students are often in the programs many months or years, and strategies to deal with affective elements of learning such as creating self-awareness, trust, and acceptance are recommended by Ferro (1993) if students are expected to stay. Baldwin (1992) acknowledged that program staff may not be able to address all negative dispositional factors that lead to dropping out, so the importance of community collaboration is vital. Students do not often expect a program to solve their problems, but getting referral information and empathy might promote retention at crucial times.

Ziegler and Sussman (1996) noted that programs are now "much more amenable to change aspects of programs that would better meet the affective nature of the learner" than in the past (p. 20). Tracy-Mumford et al. (1994), however, cited numerous studies showing that literacy and basic skills programs do not address the affective area of learning in their program structure. Awareness and flexibility may be the keys to overcoming dispositional barriers to participation. Low reading and numeracy skills hinder completion and could contribute to dispositional barriers to attendance. Embarrassment and the social stigma of low academic skills often inhibit students from starting a program. In contrast to Adult Secondary Students (ASE) whose reading and critical thinking skills range in the NALS (National Adult Literacy Survey, 1992) high 3, 4, and 5 categories, at-risk ABE students are in the NALS low 1, 2, and low 3 categories. These low level readers are able to decode words (reading word-by-word), but they are unable to comprehend the knowledge they need to complete a GED program as quickly as they would like. Marter (1989) stated that even

if students participate in a remedial phonetic program, "no amount of decoding strategy or linguistic reasoning will resolve the comprehension problem" (p. 158). Many at-risk ABE students secure jobs with GED completion as a requisite for continued employment, but their inability to comprehend material on standardized tests such as the GED, keeps them from becoming permanent employees with benefits, or from getting promotions (Jacobson, 1997).

An at-risk ABE student may have a sense of frustration regarding the amount of time it will take to complete a program of study. Bean's study (as cited in Brod, 1990) listed lack of progress, real or perceived, as the major cause for dropping out. This frustration can lead to depression, feelings of failure and eventual dropping out (Brod, 1990; Zieglar & Sussman, 1996). One project found 67% of the dropouts had "unrealistic expectations" regarding attaining their goals within the time frame they planned (Zieglar & Sussman, 1996, p. 11). Other dispositional reasons for low retention rates are hard to pinpoint at times as experienced by Beder (1991) when his study found that 87% of students dropped out within the first eight months citing various reasons, one not more illuminating than the other. Other studies showed that even though the majority of ABE students drop out early in programs, many within the first three weeks, 73% of the students report that they would go back to classes eventually (Malicky & Norman, 1994; Quigley, 1992b, 1993).

Through a survey of at-risk students completed by Belzer (1998), it was discovered the majority of subjects did not feel like failures for "stopping out" of a program (9 out of 10 had been a part of some kind of adult education at least once).

She followed ten students from entry until drop out or 4 months. "While they had stopped coming, their intentions to participate had not ended...they attributed this [dropping out] to factors beyond their control..." (Belzer, 1998, p. 2). Belzer (1998) contended that stopping out reflects a sense of powerlessness and that these learners needed help in getting around barriers to education that others may be able to negotiate for themselves.

Quigley (1993) found that low performing students who had dropped out of school frequently had a negative attitude towards further education, just as Kerka's (1988) study found that previous educational attainment was indicative of persistence. Many at-risk ABE students have been retained one or more grades in public school, which could impact a student's belief that they are unable to benefit from education at the adult level. "Grade level retention produces little improvement in student achievement and is one of the leading causes for high school drop outs," noting with disdain that ABE programs are rife with adults who were retained at least once (Sherwood, 1993, p. 12). The usual educational settings reflect middle-class American values, so many clients are at odds with ABE programs from the beginning (Beder, 1991; Imel, 1996; Long, 1992; Quigley, 1992a). Long (1992) called this attitude or feeling of not belonging "cultural dissonance" (p. 12) and believes our public education system pushed these students out rather than their dropping out. Reder (1992) asserted that at-risk ABE students do not perceive they had a need for completing an education, have an unfavorable perception of the time and effort required to develop literacy, and have a "strong dislike for the school-like design of most adult literacy programs" (p. 2).

Malicky and Norman (1994) felt drop out numbers are related to past educational experience, but D'Amico-Samuels cited in Kerka (1995) declared learners more at-risk of dropping out who have experienced "culturally insensitive teachers or have been exposed to racism, who had been labeled failures, or whose family and community circumstances demonstrated that education did not necessarily improve mobility" (p. 6).

Institutional Barriers

Students who have maneuvered around situational and dispositional barriers, often face obstacles within program structures called institutional barriers to attendance. Institutional barriers are composed of those instructional decisions and program practices that run counter to the perceptions and needs of at-risk ABE students (Sticht et al., 1998).

Kerka (1995) felt that program directors often overlooked the idea that where adults are voluntary participants, the student role is one of many roles, and adult responsibilities compete with ABE programs. This finding may suggest that every effort must be made within program structure to anticipate and attempt to meet the needs of ABE students. A positive learning climate can influence student learning (Knowles, 1984), but it may have a greater effect for at-risk ABE students who need a consistent, supportive environment in order to be successful (Knowles, 1996). The study by Sticht et al. (1998) reported some adult students felt "the school environment was not welcoming" (p. 23).

Other studies reported assessment issues troubling for teachers and students alike because the assessment practices and chosen instruments could become institutional barriers to attendance (Metz, 1989, Sticht, et al., 1998). Metz (1989) criticized the practice of testing students as they walk in the door, and instead recommended assessment be done on an informal basis in which the cultural, physiological,
psychological and education characteristics of the learner be noted through a series of interviews over a period of several sessions.

Assessment for multiple intelligences was found in several programs through the use of standardized tests as well as portfolios, but they were usually given at the beginning of a program of study, which might be intimidating to some students. Kasworm and Marienau (1997) suggested that when adult assessments reflect affective outcomes, self-directed learning skills, and the student's ability to respond to adult life, that there would be gains in a student's positive attitude about learning as well as gains in a student's belief that they could learn. This type of assessment practice or routine might counter one kind of dispositional barrier to attendance. It was suggested that when students saw that intelligence is made up of various strengths, and that they already possess some of those strengths, they were better able to see persisting as worthwhile (Sticht et al., 1998).

The literature about barriers to attendance attributed some causes to program structure and delivery methods. Solorzano (1993) pointed out that the choice of

instructional delivery must be based on adults' strengths and weaknesses, not the program's routine. He attributed some persistence to individualized study programming. Even though the most efficient use of staff and budget dollars might be the self-directed model, Quigley (1993) called this a "sink or swim approach whose time has come and gone" (p. 17). Alternatively, Quigley (1993, 1995) asserted that at-risk ABE students need small, teacher-directed classes of five or six students, and this idea was confirmed by adult students participating in the Sticht et al. (1998) study. Quigley's work (1992 a, b) proposed the importance of smaller classes because lack of teacher interaction or "lack of adequate attention from teachers" (p. 26) ranked highly on exit interviews as a reason for dropping out from public schools as well as from ABE programs. The small class size could allow more individual attention to students, and could also give instructors structured time to review and assess progress, not only for program staff reports, but for the self-esteem of the student (Solorzano, 1993).

Institutional barriers to attendance were reflected in a study by Hayes and Valentine (1989) regarding educational needs of ABE students. These researchers found that providers and students have very different views about what ABE students need to learn and in what order. Self-reports from students regarding literacy needs were compared to program curriculum. Hayes and Valentine (1989) said the self-reports "revealed a striking tendency for students [to think they] learn most of what they needed least and to learn least about what they needed most" (p. 11). Learning that is perceived as relevant by the students met the needs of adult ABE students, and this,

according to a study by Sticht et al. (1998), may be a factor in retaining students. Some students attributed non-participation to the perceived irrelevance of learning to real world settings in programs even when students acknowledge a need for further education (Adult Education Through Technology Project, 1991; Imel, 1996).

The literature review revealed that control and management of learning tasks, evaluation, delivery methods, content, and timeline for completion is determined by teachers alone, students alone, or both. Garrison's (1997) research, however, tied control and choice to motivation, persistence and retention. His study concluded that genuine student-centered delivery programs allow students to know why the exact requirements, or objectives, are in place and also allow self-selection of relevant objectives and the choice of approaches to learning. Garrison (1997) defined self-directed learning as an approach that lets students "assume personal responsibility and collaborative control of cognitive (self-monitoring) and contextual (self-management) processes in constructing and confirming meaningful and worthwhile learning outcomes" (p. 18). As students collaborate with teachers to design their program of study, called collaborative constructivism, persistence would be built in (Garrison, 1997). Tice (1997) supported Garrison, saying that the debate between who should control program structure is irrelevant because adult programs need both student and teacher input. It appears that any method of program structure designed to produce a less school-like setting allows students to feel in control and promotes retention (Horton, 1996; Pratt, 1988; Reder, 1992; Tracy-Mumford et al., 1994). Intake

data might be utilized to reveal situational, dispositional, or institutional barriers to attendance as well as to aid in the design of successful programs of study.

Nature of Intake Procedures

The intake procedures of some successful programs help to identify possible barriers to attendance, and that allows administrators to structure a program of study based on the unique needs of those students (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992; Guisier & Molek, 1992; Quigley, 1993).

To Identify Barriers

Systematic Barrier Alerts

Successful program staff include questions on their intake questionnaires that would alert staff to possible barriers to attendance (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992; Guisier & Molek, 1992; Quigley, 1993). Whether using oral interviews or written intake forms, successful program staff have devised systems to alert staff to those students who are more at risk of dropping out, on the assumption that academic test scores alone are not reliable indicators, a combination of test scores and probing intake questionnaires are often used (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992; Guisier & Molek, 1992; Quigley, 1993). In order to signal the intake review staff at Project Drop In, a job training center in Lewistown, Pennsylvania, to place the student in the program's support network system, intake questions were created to reveal dispositional and institutional barriers to attendance (Guisier & Molek, 1992). Situational barriers are most obvious to probe

for and are addressed upon intake by staff, while dispositional barriers are anticipated when responses to questions are more negative than positive regarding belief in one's ability, prior experience with education, meta-cognitive skills, self-esteem, interest or motivation, and support from family. Institutional barrier questions profile the student according to learning preferences, acceptable class convenience, and perceived need for individual attention (Guisier & Molek, 1992).

Examples of Barrier Alert Questions

A summary of intake questions in two successful programs used to probe for dispositional and institutional barriers to attendance is shown in Table 1. These questions are part of the intake procedures at Project Drop In (Guisier & Molek, 1992) and Settlement House (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992).

Table 1

Identifying Barriers to Attendance for At-Risk Students

Barriers
Dispositional
1. Why did you decide to come to school?
2. Do you have support for taking these classes? From whom? Is anyone discouraging you from taking classes?
3. How did you feel at registration? During the introduction? During the test?
4. What are your goals? How long will it take you to achieve your goals?
5. What are your expectations for the class? What do you think the program can do about your expectations?
6. What is your living situation?

Table 1, continued

7. What is your overall reaction toward prior school experiences?

8. Is this the first adult program you have ever attended?

9. Were you ever in special education programs at public school?

10. Who were your best and worst teachers? Why?

11. What are your strengths and weaknesses?

12. Tell me about your job history? Why did you leave?

13. What are your interests and hobbies?

14. Do you have time to study and a place to study?

Institutional

15. How do you feel about your teacher? Do you feel like you may need to talk about personal problems with your teacher? Would you be able to?

16. Do you feel like you could talk to your teacher if there was a problem in class?

17. Do you like the other people in the class? Has the teacher done anything to help everyone feel comfortable together?

18. How do you think you learn best? From what?

19. Are you involved with other social service agencies? List them.

20. Describe the class setting that you would be comfortable in.

21. What problems do you think this center has that will interfere with you?

Note. Questions 1-5 and 15-17 are from Project: Drop In. Final report (1992). TIU Adult Education and Job Training Center, Lewistown, PA. Pennsylvania State Dept. of Education: Div. of Adult Basic and Literacy Education Programs. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 352 534)

Table 1, continued

Questions 6-14 and 18-21 are from Towards the ABE promised land: Creating a successful learning environment by examining retention rates, final report, Settlement House. (1992). Lutheran Social Mission Society, Philadelphia. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 352 538)

Quigley (1993) used an intake procedure to determine the degree of negative feelings from prior schooling (see Appendix A for prior schooling intake form). Negative reaction to prior schooling, a dispositional barrier, appears to affect retention rates. Kerka's (1988) retention strategy study suggests that previous educational attainment is indicative of persistence; those most dissatisfied with school dropped out the earliest, attaining few years of schooling. Quigley (1995) wants program directors to not only make teachers aware of how important the knowledge of a student's past educational experience is, but he also wants them to create an "unlearning component to overcome previous negative associations with schooling" (p. 6). The learning design should be made more effective and promote retention if for no other reason than reflecting respect for individual preferences and aversions (Quigley, 1993).

To Address Barriers to Attendance

In several studies it was noted that as intake data are reviewed, often by a variety of staff, the most obvious barriers to attendance are usually addressed first (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992; Guisier & Molek, 1992; Marshall, 1992). Obvious barriers are

most often situational barriers, but many dispositional barriers, and sometimes institutional barriers become apparent at the first meeting between student and staff.

Situational Barriers

Situational barriers to attendance revealed at intake are often addressed by programs that provide transportation through program vehicles, public transportation, or peer support; additionally, programs provide on-site child-care, arrange care through local providers, or facilitate peer and family support systems to overcome these barriers to attendance (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992; Guisier & Molek, 1992; Marshall, 1992).

Dispositional Barriers

Dispositional barriers to attendance, those relating to personality and attitude, are more difficult to pinpoint, yet the literature review indicates that program staff are addressing these problems when the systematic review of intake data alert staff that there is a need (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992; Guisier & Molek, 1992; Marshall, 1992).

Self-esteem issues.

In Cohen's (1997) work with students, much emphasis was placed on students reassessing themselves: work, personal, future. Cohen (1997) helped students to see how smart they were then, before he tried to build upon knowledge bases. This valuing of different kinds of knowledge and skills resulted in tremendous gains in self-esteem which were reported in self-reports or teacher anecdotal journals (Cohen, 1997; Goertzel & Keeley, 1992). The literature reflects the difficulty in assessing progress in improved self-esteem, but acknowledges that more funding sources are using improved

self-esteem as a program quality indicator. Cohen et al. (1995) described low self-esteem as a "barrier to employability" (p. 1), and noted that some programs do not include sessions in building self-esteem. Low self-esteem is tied to the absence of an internal locus of control in research by Brookfield (1986) and Long (1992). An internal locus of control would reflect success as a result of personal effort, instead of luck. An external locus of control would attribute success to teachers, peers, or other externally controlled event. Long (1992) asserted that repeated teaching of the power of an internal locus of control could lead to increased self-esteem and to generalization of successes into other life areas. Furthermore, several studies tied improved self-esteem to higher attendance rates (Garrison, 1997; Goertzel & Keeley, 1992).

Support groups.

One method the Lutheran Settlement House of Philadelphia (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992) used to maintain their 75% retention rate was to establish a network of support for adult learners. The lack of support is often cited as a dispositional barrier to attendance throughout the literature. The source of support for the Settlement House (Goertzel & Keeley,1992) took various forms: family and friends, the local counseling center, the area employment agency, a program staff member. The Settlement House (Goertzel & Keeley,1992) administrators felt strongly that even one supporter, or mentor, could keep the student from dropping out because the support secured the "perception that they were achieving their goals" (p. 7).

Another support system was devised by the TIU Adult Education and Job Training Center, Lewistown, Pennsylvania, called the Speaker's Bureau (Goss, 1992).

The project team decided to help students build their speaking skills before audiences, not only to increase students' grammatical skills, but to increase public awareness of the program as well. The speeches were taped and made available to the other students. This self-esteem building project became a system of support and a motivation tool. Peer support was documented as a retention tool in several studies (Imel, 1994; Quigley, 1993). An in-place support network seems to counter some dispositional reasons for attrition because students feel they have help in reaching goals, and the literature review shows that feeling successful is directly related to student retention (Garrison, 1997; Long, 1989; Tracy-Mumford et al., 1994).

Meta-cognition skills.

An often frustrating dispositional barrier to attendance is the students' feeling of inability to learn new material. Program staff might offset this by helping students be successful in content areas through the teaching of how to learn skills. Wagner (1995) proposed that adults retain knowledge longer if original learning includes strategies for remembering. Garrison (1997) stated that all students could learn, no matter their age, if students were taught meta-cognitive strategies. Students who learn skills in self-monitoring, attention to locus of control, and volition, or ways to sustain motivation, would then become self-directed learners (Garrison, 1997). Blair (1996) insisted that "our educational aim must be to move the adult from dependence to independence to interdependence...by teaching people how to learn" (p. 40). He suggested that most learning takes place out of the classroom, and in his Freire-like

voice says "if we don't focus on teaching people how to teach themselves, we not only shortchange the individual, we shortchange society as well" (p. 41).

Institutional Barriers

The research shows that sound intake procedures could alert staff that there might be institutional barriers to attendance, and that staff needs to guide a student into the appropriate program of study for his/her success. Intake questionnaires, similar to those in Table 1, help staff anticipate institutional barriers to attendance and are frequently coupled with academic assessment methods to profile the needs of students (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992; Guisier & Molek, 1992; Marshall, 1992).

Assessment procedures.

Academic assessments are administered with respect for students' time and prior schooling experience, once a student is identified at the intake as at-risk of dropping out due to situational or dispositional barriers (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992; Guisier & Molek, 1992; Marshall, 1992). The assessment procedure itself has been cited as a reason for dropping out in some cases. Metz (1989) acknowledged that determining assessment results quickly is important, but warned that the need for efficiency might replace accuracy, and that the type of test administered might drive away students before they begin a course of study.

Successful programs are moving from grade level indicators to assessment tools based on the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS, 1992). Some programs use student portfolios to supplement standardized testing. Stein (1997) and the National Institute

for Literacy (NIFL) would like to see assessment of adult learners revolve around their perceived adult role maps as outlined in their Equipped for the Future program. Even when program staff use a multiple indicator system for assessing gains, Venezky, Bristow, and Sabatini (1994) say it is logical to think a student who has low level reading abilities will need more time to gain strengths, and would be more at risk of dropping out. In the Dirkx and Jha (1994) study of attrition using age and academic ability as predictors, it was found that reading and math scores are the most salient predictors for completion and further support the observation that "prior academic preparation was associated with completion" (p. 282).

Appropriate standardized tests for at-risk ABE students measure a broad range of skills, or multiple intelligences. The Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS) evaluates mechanical reasoning, spatial relations, verbal reasoning, numerical ability, language usage, word knowledge, perceptual speed and accuracy, as well as manual speed and dexterity (Frazee, 1996). Another appropriate test of a student's abilities is the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) test which is now linked directly to the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) table, and to Workforce 2000 goals (CASAS, 1998). CASAS tests indicate ability across a continuum of difficulty to reveal strengths and weaknesses in all ranges of functional, context-based literacy skills. These tests are relevant to real-world applications by being tied to job skills, and their use might counter the institutional barrier of lack of school relevance reported in the Sticht et al. (1998) study.

Program design.

Research on methods to counter student frustration with program environments, a type of institutional barrier to attendance, suggests that goal management, learning methods, evidences of success, of overall course design should be a collaborative effort, routinely assessed for at-risk ABE students (Garrison, 1997; Quigley, 1993, Tracy-Mumford et al., 1994). Retention rates are low for at-risk ABE students according to Pierce, Harper, Hensley, Grubb, and Hall (1993) due to the way project directors approach ABE learners - as a homogeneous group. "There are numerous subgroups or subpopulations within the identified ABE population; each differs from the other in important ways and should thus be approached with different strategies in both recruitment and retention" (Pierce et al., p. 20). The intake process could help to identify subgroups of populations and allow timely implementation of intervention strategies. Quigley (1993) believed these at-risk students need small group teaching or one-on-one tutoring situation, with the teacher directing learning. The students in his ideal program would move to self-directed study and computer-assisted study after certain levels of progress were seen in basic skills.

The U. S. National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs (NEAEP) study (Ziegler & Sussman, 1996) indicated the ABE clients stay longer in teacher- directed programs, as opposed to self-study programs because of "more nurturing opportunities for learners" which occur more frequently in small, structured classes (p. 21). Quigley (1993) does acknowledge the cost of small classes and ABE budget restraints as prohi-

bitive, but suggests other approaches to instruction as "more successful than the traditional [self-directed] approach for reluctant learners" (p. 13). Quigley (1993) stated that if self-directed programs of study take the form of televisions or computers, at-risk ABE students seem to fare better with structured video programs like Literacy Link from the Public Broadcasting System or Kentucky Educational Television (Hopey, 1998), or by structured educational software packages from GED specialized publishers.

Caverly (as cited in Lewis, 1997) pointed out that both teacher directed and student directed methods of instruction are "Vygotskian constructivist learning communities in which the teacher/expert should guide but not limit the learning of the student/novice, and both novice and expert grow and learn" and both could be successfully used with students (p. 2). Programs with high retention rates often use a system of study that is student-centered and need-centered. Taylor and Marienau (as cited in Imel, 1995) called this the "new pedagogy" where students and teachers collaborate to design learning needs (p. 2).

Satisfaction with teachers.

The effect of small class nurturing is hard to measure objectively, but self-reports from exiting students in several programs point to a teacher's personal influence, his/her personality, and genuine respect of learners as reasons for persisting (Babchuk & Courtney, 1995). Nurss and Singh (1993) conducted research on an Atlanta area family literacy program and reported that even though the program's numerous dropouts left for personal reasons, 60%, the majority, claimed that the highly praised teachers were the reason they had stayed as long as they did. The ratio of students to

teacher is an important consideration since research shows that at-risk ABE students want more attention from teachers (Quigley, 1987, 1992b), and teacher availability, or lack thereof, is a factor in student retention studies by Malitz and Nixon-Ponder (1995) and Knibbe and Dusewicz (1990).

Staff development.

Institutional barriers can come from the policies and practices of a program (Sticht et al., 1998) and could be reviewed as part of staff development. A monograph by Canaff and Hutto (1995) focused on a successful program with a policy of continued staff development which centered around classroom strategies to handle students' disrupting life crises often seen with at-risk ABE students. They assert that the ABE classroom should be a "safe haven for students, and that teachers' actions, interest or lack of interest...and the degree of concern or caring expressed...could make all the difference in program retention" (p. 3). A teacher's ability to reduce student anxiety and address crises instead of ignoring them was also discussed as a retention effort in the staff development program called Catch Them, Calm Them, Keep Them (Duff & Flanigan, 1993).

Use of stop-out period.

Retaining students who stop coming for periods of time and then return is a concern for some researchers. Most students are reported at intake as entering, leaving, and reentering programs, but Tracy-Mumford et al. (1994) suggested that project directors should be ready for these inevitable no-shows through program design. She felt that each withdrawal should be seen as temporary, and not another

education failure for learners, and communicated to the student as such. The informed decision to withdraw should be accompanied by "a plan for future action" (p. 5). "The phenomenon of stopping out--one or more cycles of attending, withdrawing, and return--is typical of adults who must place the student role on the back burner temporarily" (Kerka, 1995, p. 5). Successful programs broach the subject of dropping out during the intake period thereby allaying embarrassment and self-defeating attitudes, some even arranging a time for stopping-out (Tracy-Mumford et al., 1994). This study also recommended that a program be set up to review student goals monthly so that students might feel more comfortable with adjustments in expected completion time. Since progress is often made in small steps, pushing an expected completion date back gradually instead of all at one time may seem less intimidating. Belzer (1998) said that retention would be improved when program staff "showed respect, and not disgust, for the dynamic situations in learners' lives, arranging the learning environment to deal with the reality that some students will always be coming and going, but hopefully come again" (p. 4). Belzer (1998) also suggested that while a program has the student enrolled, they should be taught the habit of reading and writing every day, and he also encouraged program staff to keep in contact with students so that they could continue study with home lessons, and still feel connected should they have to stop out.

Meeting student needs.

Other institutional barriers that were addressed when intake data indicated a need required small adjustments in program structure. ABE/GED centers are often referral centers for students, and many keep social service information readily available

at the intake area. The referral component is shown to positively influence retention (Quigley, 1993; Tracy-Mumford et al., 1994). Since the SPARK Project (Marshall, 1992) is housed inside a North Carolina community college, referrals are made to financial aid, career centers, and counselors during the intake period and throughout a student's course of study. This allows students to become familiar with the names and faces of people who would be helping them with further educational goals. In order to dispel the idea that a ABE/GED program of study is not relevant to students' needs, many programs include career skills as part of the curriculum. Imel (1996) stressed that centers should provide structured teaching in the areas of computer skills, decision-making skills, and critical thinking skills. At the Housing University (Filipczak, 1997), teacher Mrs. Wade-Black says, "You can't sustain self-esteem...if you don't do something with it... and the learning of job skills helps them see themselves as someone an employer would want to hire" (p. 58). Filipczak (1997) reported that upon receiving her GED Diploma one student "shouted in defiance at the obstacles that had defeated her in the past: lack of training and lack of self-respect" (p. 59). Adding to the endorsement of job skills within an educational design came from data gathered at Piedmont Community College (Inman, 1992) which experienced a gain in student retention ranging from 1.5 to 25% in the year that computers were introduced into their Adult Education and Literacy Program.

Any effort to change the learning environment to accommodate the needs of at-risk ABE students might be an effective retention strategy. Ziegler and Sussman

(1996) stated that the cost benefit for programs is higher when limited resources are put into instruction, learner motivation techniques, and staff development. The SPARK Project (Marshall, 1992) changed several program procedures, but mainly became more responsive to the needs of students; one instance of this responsiveness is extending GED testing opportunities for working students. The Settlement House exit surveys (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992) listed teacher interaction, curriculum presentation, material selections, and the variety of class structures like large group discussions, small group interactions, peer tutoring, and students in leadership roles as positive retention features of the program.

The common thread seen from this review of literature of retention strategies is that once learning is realized, or when students begin to see that it is possible to achieve, retention issues became secondary instead of a first priority (Garrison, 1997; Long, 1992; Tracy-Mumford et al., 1994). This suggests that when programs change structures of learning environments, institutional barriers to attendance, at-risk ABE students achieve success.

Summary of Literature Review

The body of literature on factors that affect retention of adult education students adequately examines situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers to attendance. The literature review verifies the ability of intake data to identify such barriers, and to begin measures to counter these barriers early in a student's program of study. The literature reveals the methods used by successful programs to counter

barriers to attendance such as addressing the need for child care and transportation. The review of research on successful programs confirms that it is crucial to create learning programs based on individual student needs, to address the stop out period beforehand, and that it is possible to make the intake process part of the solution to retention problems.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the nature of intake procedures in Texas Adult Education programs (literacy, ABE, or ASE) and to determine to what extent they assist program staff to identify and address barriers to attendance for students with the goal of obtaining a GED certificate. A written survey was used to determine information exchanged during intake to identify barriers to attendance, and how the intake data allow program staff to address the specific needs of these students. The techniques of survey research design and data analysis suggested by Fowler (1995), Magione (1995), and Salant and Dillman (1994) were employed in this study.

Research Questions

The research questions (RQ) in this study were:

RQ 1 - What is the nature of intake procedures?

RQ 2 - How do the intake data identify and address barriers to attendance?

Instruments and Procedures

In order to examine the nature of intake procedures and how intake data may identify and address barriers to attendance for Texas Adult Education students, respondents were asked to describe their program's exchange of information with entering students. To enhance validity, the survey questions were organized according to recognized barriers to attendance taken from the literature review (Sticht, McDonald, & Erickson, 1998).

A written survey was chosen because it was felt the respondents could control the question pace, and a personal interview might have influenced answers thus reducing reliability (Salant & Dillman, 1994). The survey was pilot-tested with eleven professionals known to have expertise in the adult education field (See Appendix B for a list of Pilot Study Participants). The participants included two representatives from the adult basic education research field, two adult reading specialists, two program directors, and five professionals who currently provide or have provided instruction to students. The pilot test results were analyzed to ensure that survey questions were not leading or biased, and that the questions would reveal the providers' current questions asked of students during intake procedures.

Based on the recommendations of the pilot study respondents, the survey was revised and necessary adjustments were made in only three instances. On question two, it was suggested that confusion might result when respondents were asked to identify their position. The word "primary" was added before position so that respondents would indicate their formal position, even though they may act in many

capacities in their program. Redundant wording was eliminated in question 15 and question 18 was split into two closed-choice questions to promote ease of response. Feedback from pilot participants ensured that the wording was clear, i.e., words were likely to be understood by the majority of respondents in the same way.

The respondents were asked identifying data in questions one through seven, but were not asked specific retention statistics because of the possible negative effect on the response rate due to the fact that such data may not have always been available at each site surveyed. The survey was designed to reflect the current research regarding barriers to attendance: how program staff identify potential barriers to attendance and how program staff counter barriers to attendance.

Open-ended questions such as those in Section II of the survey, Identifying and Addressing, questions 14, 16, 18, 19, and 20, offer several advantages. They offer the researcher the opportunity to gain access to answers not previously predicted. Logistically, open-ended questions offer an alternative to very long lists of possible options when the researcher wants diversity and inclusiveness in the answers (Fowler, 1995). Open-ended questions are most appropriate when the range of answers exceeds the length that could be contained in a list and when the answers cannot be reduced to a word or to a short phrase (Fowler). The questions requested respondents to indicate how data are gathered from students regarding such topics as a student's learning style, academic ability, previous experience with schooling, expectations about the class. The last question, number 22, was designed as an open-ended question to elicit remarks about what program staff do to encourage

attendance. These closing comments on attendance barriers were evaluated and sorted into categories as shown in Appendix F. Respondents were asked to send a copy of their own intake instrument, and if possible, some examples of homework assigned. The open-ended question design allowed respondents to elaborate on individual decisions which might reflect their use of intake data to make these decisions.

Fixed-response or closed-choice questions such as those that require the respondent to rank order options (e.g. Section I, question eight), or to select a classification (e.g. Section I, question 7) are appropriate to allow the researcher to be clear about how specific or detailed an answer he or she is seeking from the respondent (Fowler, 1995). A ranking question design in question eight asked respondents to indicate the uses of intake data using the closed choices of spotting enrollment trends, funding reports, identifying student needs, staff development, determining program offerings, and an open "other" choice as well. Additionally, a ranking system was chosen for question eight in order to discern the respondents' perceived value of intake data.

The survey instrument used a fixed-response design for questions 9 through 13, and 18. Fixed-response questions tend to work well to measure the extent of a practice (e.g. Section II, question 15) in a systematic manner (Fowler, 1995). The questions asked for data regarding a program's efforts to address barriers to attendance regarding such topics such as how decisions are made about a program's design, how curriculum is delivered, how information is gathered about goals, student expectations, and if child care or transportation is offered. A fixed-response or closed-choice

question design minimized measurement error because choices were "clearly defined and mutually exclusive" (Salant & Dillman, 1994).

Those fixed-response questions that ask for a YES-NO response (e.g. Section II, the first part of question 20 regarding attendance requirements and waiting lists) are useful for survey items about which the researcher needs a definitive positive or negative response (Magione, 1995). The fixed-response design also ensured that the respondents could possibly answer the survey within thirty minutes, which promoted a high response rate.

As suggested by Salant and Dillman (1994), the questions contained no "undefined abbreviations and minimal jargon" (p. 93). Questions were not intended to be leading, were worded without bias, and were "critical to solving the problem," resulting in a survey that was relevant, reliable, and useful (Salant & Dillman, 1994, p. 25).

In order to maximize validity of responses, the survey garnered responses without implying that the program's design or mission was flawed if certain responses were given. The program's identity was not revealed in the summation of the data. The providers were registered with the Texas Education Agency's Adult Education Division (high school, community colleges, or junior college sites), Even Start programs (TEA, 1999) or they were listed with Texas A & M Literacy Provider Network (TCALL, 1999). Respondents were asked to fill the survey out only once in case of cross-listings in the three databases.

A survey is often referred to as being anonymous, but in fact, it is not; a researcher who plans to do follow-up must be able to determine non responders. "Confidentiality means you can associate responses with particular people but you do not" (Salant & Dillman, 1994, p. 9). The information received in this study was handled confidentially. The survey form was assigned a code number on the cover sheet. Identifying information was kept separately from responses and used only for follow-up contacts. The list connecting the name and code number was kept in a separate locked file.

It was expected that a low return rate, or non-response error, would be minimal because of the importance programs place on participants' attendance and the potential value of implications drawn from the survey results for program directors. As an enticement to complete the survey, those respondents with access were promised that they would be directed to a web site that will eventually post the study, the survey results, the implications and recommendations, and sample intake forms.

The survey was mailed with the request that it be returned within two weeks. Included was an introductory letter, consent agreement, survey instrument, and a return envelope with postage provided. The survey instrument appears as Appendix C and the introductory letter and Informed Consent agreement appear as Appendix E. Participants were also asked to forward a copy of their current written intake form and any samples of homework. Three-hundred-seventy-four surveys were sent in the first mailing. After three weeks a second mailing was sent to non-responders. A third attempt with reminders soliciting responses was mailed two weeks later. Two-

hundred-eleven responses were received with 94 respondents indicating they did not want to participate in the study, yielding an overall response rate of 31% (N=117). After five weeks, data collection ended.

Subjects

Subjects were selected to reflect a representative sample: Adult Education providers in Texas school districts, community colleges, and Even Start Family Literacy projects in Texas listed in the database of the 1998 Texas Education Agency (TEA, 1999a). Also included in the sample were Texas Literacy providers from the Spring 1998 database of the Texas Center for Adult Literacy and Learning at Texas A & M University (TCALL) (1999). In the sample database were 63 Texas Adult Education providers (TEA, 1999a), 44 Texas Even Start programs (TEA, 1999a), and 267 Texas Literacy providers (TCALL, 1999) for a combined total of 374. In case of overlap in providers, respondents were cautioned to return only one survey for each site. The sample was comprehensive because of the inclusion of different types of programs and because the majority of programs throughout the entire state were included.

The difference in parameters of the types of programs did not contribute to sampling error. Potential drop-outs, or at-risk students, are often found in all three types of programs and all face barriers to attending: situational barriers, dispositional barriers, and institutional barriers. Therefore, information exchanged during intake and what is done with that data are relevant to all three groups. Responses from either program directors or teachers were accepted since it was assumed that each would be knowledgeable about intake procedures. Further, program directors may supervise

more than one site and may not have been as available as teachers to complete the survey. No surveys were sent to GED programs in prisons or workplace only sites because retention issues for voluntary participants are the focus of this study.

Description of Survey

The survey instrument solicited a description of the intake procedures used by program directors or teachers. Survey questions were aligned with the two research questions: what is the nature of intake procedures and how do intake data identify and address barriers to attendance (see Appendix D for Survey Question Design). Respondents were asked to answer 22 questions describing their program's intake procedures which revealed their efforts at identifying barriers to attendance for adult education students, as well as their plans to address these barriers (See Appendix C for Survey).

The questions were further aligned with the typical barriers to attendance as defined by Sticht et al. (1998), as closely as possible (see Operational Definitions for institutional, dispositional, and situational barriers). The number of questions for each category was determined by this researcher based on studies of successful programs in the literature review. The proportions for the number of survey questions under dispositional, institutional, and situational reflect the research findings for students' reasons for separation from programs (See Appendix D for Survey Question Design). Questions were asked as a combination of open-ended and fixed-choice selections, and respondents were encouraged to answer every question.

Identifying data regarding position of respondent, learners served, sources of funding, and type of program were solicited in questions 1-7. Question 18 was designed to reveal the most common situational barriers to attendance: child care and transportation. Dispositional barriers were addressed in question numbers 15, 16, and 19, and dealt with reasons for non-attendance stemming from personality, attitude, or beliefs about an ability to learn. Institutional barriers were reflected in numbers 8-14, 17, 20-21, and looked at a program's choice of instructional methods, policies regarding attendance and stop-out periods, practices regarding intended use of the intake data, which program personnel gather the data, when it is gathered, and which program personnel analyze the data as reasons for non-attendance. Question 22 was an open-ended question for additional comments, especially those that deal with student retention.

Design and Analysis

In order to examine the nature of intake procedures and how the intake data might identify and address barriers to attendance for Adult Education students, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the survey data that define and describe the information exchanged between entering students and program administrators. The survey results were analyzed and reported as frequencies and percentages to responses using the statistical software package SPSS (Statistical Products and Service Solutions, 1998). The open-ended comments regarding student retention efforts can be seen in

Appendix F. Actual program intake forms were solicited, and six respondents complied. Homework samples were offered by one program. Compilations of responses revealed the typical information exchanged during intake procedures.

Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology for the proposed study, including a description of the survey instrument, the subjects included in the study, and the design and analysis of the study. Texas Adult Education providers serving students at the literacy level, Adult Basic Education (ABE) level, and the Adult Secondary Level (ASE) were surveyed. The providers were registered with the Texas Education Agency's Adult Education Division, Even Start programs, or they were listed with Texas A & M Literacy Provider Network. The survey was designed around the two research questions regarding the information exchanged by program intake personnel and the degree to which that information aids in identifying and addressing the barriers to attendance. A pilot study was conducted and results were used to refine the final survey described in this chapter (see Appendix C).

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

A survey to determine the nature of intake procedures and how that data can identify and address barriers to attendance was sent to 374 Literacy, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and General Education Development (GED) programs in the State of Texas. The providers were registered with the Texas Education Agency's Adult Education Division (high school, community colleges, or junior college sites), Even Start programs (TEA, 1999) or they were listed with Texas A & M Literacy Provider Network (TCALL, 1999). Two-hundred-eleven responses were received with 94 respondents indicating they did not want to participate in the study, yielding an overall response rate of 31% (N=117). Thirty respondents (26%) offered open-ended remarks regarding attendance promotion, six (5.0%) included samples of information exchanged at intake, and one included samples of homework.

It should be noted that not every one of the 22 questions was answered by every one of the 117 respondents, nor was every question answered completely. On these questions, percentages of responses do not total 100%. The results are reported as frequencies according to research questions as shown in the Survey Question Design (see Appendix D). The questions were assigned to categories of attendance barriers as

defined by Sticht, McDonald & Erickson, (1998), as closely as possible (see Operational Definitions for institutional, dispositional, and situational barriers). It was found in the literature review that professionals may have opinions than differ from those of Sticht et al. (1998) as to the makeup of the categories of barriers to attendance. It became obvious during the literature review that the categories referred to by Sticht et al. depicted the reasons for non-attendance adequately and were generalizable across all three program types; therefore, their delineations were used. The number of questions on the survey for each category was determined by this researcher based on studies of successful programs in the literature review.

Section 1: Identifying Data

Who responded

Question 1 was used for survey **identification** references and Question 3 asked for **phone** and e-mail information.

Question 2 asked for the **position** of the respondent as a director, teacher, or "other," with the "other" choice to be designated by the closed choices of office assistant, volunteer, staff, or counselor. This question was designed as closed-choice due to the variety of titles that might be encountered within the three types of providers. Ninety-nine (84.6%) (N=117) respondents characterize themselves as director, 15 (12.8%) as teacher, one (0.9)% as office assistant, one (0.9%) as staff, and one (0.9%) as counselor.

Who is served

Question 4 asked respondents to give an estimate of the number of **learners served** in a week. Through closed choices that would promote ease of response, the survey revealed 62 (53.9%) (N=115) respondents serve over 50 clients, 25 (21.7%) serve 11-30 clients, 19 (16.5%) serve 31-50 clients, and 9 (7.8%) serve between 2-10 clients per week.

Question 5 requested that respondents give an estimate of **GED completions** for the previous year. Answers were ranked using the same closed choices as Question 4 with an added category of zero in order to include those programs whose mission does not include offering a GED diploma program of study. Twenty-eight (24.6%) (N=114) respondents reported 11-30 completions, 27 (23.7%) reported 2-10 completions, 26 (22.8%) reported zero completions, 23 (20.2%) reported over 50 completions, and 10 (8.8%) reported 31-50 GED completions.

Question 7 asked respondents to characterize in detail the **type of clients** they serve for identification purposes. Four closed-choice answers were offered including an "other" choice due to the variety of providers. The "other" choice was selected often and the following results emerged: 41 (35.0%) (N=117) characterized their program as serving GED, Literacy/ABE and English as a Second Language (ESL) clients, 40 (34.2%) characterized their program as serving both GED and Literacy/ABE clients, 22 (18.8%) serving Literacy/ABE, and ESL, 8 (6.8%) characterized their program as serving only

GED clients, 5 (4.3%) characterized their program as serving only Literacy clients, and 1(0.9%) serving only ESL clients.

Funding sources

Question 6 asked for the **sources of program funding** in an open-ended format in order to allow for the variety of providers and to allow state-wide sponsors to be acknowledged. Thirty-six (31.3%) (N=115) indicated that funding is provided by federal and state funds, 26 (22.6%) indicated state grants, 20 (17.4%) indicated state and private funds, 18 (15.7%) indicated private funds alone, 10 (8.7%) indicated a combination of federal, state, and private funds, and 5 (4.3%) indicated federal funds alone are used to operate their program.

Section II: Institutional Barriers to Attendance, RQ1: Nonattendance Stemming from Instructional Methods, Policies, Practices or Requirements

Institutional barriers: Determining instructional methods

Question 14 was composed of seven parts clustered around how program staff retrieve certain data in order to make instructional method decisions such as when instruction will be delivered, what curriculum choices will be offered, and what methods of curriculum delivery will be used (see Table 2). Although some examples were offered, respondents were given an open-ended format for these questions in order to capture the nature of each of the individual intake processes. Not all respondents answered all parts of Question 14. Part one of Question 14 asked how **learning**

preference is determined, and part two asked how **academic ability** is determined. Part three asked how program staff determine when to review or adjust **student goals** and part four asked how the **class setting** (group, individual, computer-based, etc.) is determined. It should be noted that even though 15 programs report using formal testing for learning preference determination (in Part one of Question 14), only one reports using that information to determine class setting. Part five asked how program staff determine a client's history of **learning disabilities** and part six asked how program staff determine the **curriculum delivery method**. Part seven of Question 14 asked how the **hours of operation** are determined, but five responses were invalid because the responses did not match the question.

Table 2

Intake Factors Influencing Program Design

Sources for Structure, Content and Delivery Methods-Question 14	n	Frequency
How Learning Preference Determined-14a	117	
Informal Testing and Teacher Observation		62 (52.9%)
Do Not Inquire		22 (18.8%)
Wait for Student Request		18 (15.4%)
Commercial Test		15 (12.8%)
How Academic Ability Determined-14b	117	
Standardized Tests- unidentified		56 (47.9%)
Standardized Test - identified TABE		47 (40.2%)
Teacher Discretion		12 (10.3%)
Do Not Screen		2 (1.7%)

Table 2, continued

Sources for Structure, Content and Delivery Methods-Question 14

	n	Frequency
When Goals Reviewed or Adjusted-14c	116	
As Needed or as Problems Encountered		51 (44.0%)
Upon Subtest Completion		30 (25.9%)
Automatically at Quarter or Semester		15 (12.9%)
Do Not Review		10 (8.6%)
Monthly		7 (6.0%)
Weekly		3 (2.6%)
How Class Setting Determined -14d (Group, Individual, Computer-based)	116	
Teacher		65 (56.0%)
Student Requests		21 (18.1%)
Combination Teacher, Student, Funding		18 (15.5%)
Do Not Ask		10 (8.6%)
Results of Learning Style Test		1 (0.9%)
Funding Restrictions Alone		1 (0.9%)
How Learning Disabilities Determined-14e	116	
Self-disclosure		69 (59.5%)
Do Not Ask		22 (19.0%)
Self-disclosure and Access to Public School Records		17 (14.7%)
Self-disclosure, School Records, Informal Tests		2 (1.7%)
School Records Alone		2 (1.7%)
Administer Informal Screenings		2 (1.7%)
Determine Curriculum Delivery Method-14f	115	
(which software or books, oral, prerecorded video, commercial program)		
Combination Teacher, Learning Style, Fund Restrictions		64 (55.7%)
Teacher		43 (37.4%)
Learning Style Results		5 (4.3%)
Funding Restrictions Alone		3 (2.6%)
How Hours of Operation Determined-14g	112	
Student Requests		45 (40.2%)
Teacher, Student Requests, Funding Restrictions		25 (23.2%)
Facility Manager		22 (19.6%)
Funding Restrictions Alone		19 (17.0%)

Question 21 presented respondents with a chance to describe the type of instruction provided to students **beyond the basic academic studies** (see Table 3). They could have indicated as many of the supplementary curriculum choices as related to their program, so the totals were more than 117. Closed-ended choices were offered to ease data collection, but respondents could have elaborated by using the "other" choice provided as well.

Table 3

Content Areas Supplementing Basic Skills

Areas of Instruction-Question 21	n	Frequency
Enhancing Job Skills	98	(83.7%)
Learning Skills Strategies	86	(73.5%)
Accessing Area Social Agency Services	85	(72.6%)
Building Self-Esteem	83	(70.9%)
Other Areas	61	(52.1%)
How to be Proactive or Instruction in Self-Advocacy	60	(51.3%)

Note. Among the 61 "other" responses to Question 21were instruction such as child care issues, women's health issues, buying houses, and job interviewing skills.

Institutional barriers: Program policies

Questions 9,11, 12, 13, and 20 related to program policies that might help define the nature of intake procedures which focus on research question one. Survey results

are reported together in Table 4 for Questions 11, 12, and 13 for clarity about the procedures for collecting intake data.

Question 9 addressed how program staff **conduct intake procedures** through closed-ended choices. The majority of programs, 96 (82.1%) (N=117), report having to use a combination of writing and verbal interviewing techniques during the intake process, 12 (10.3%) use only verbal intake procedures, while 9 (7.7%) rely only on written intake procedures.

Question 11 asked **who** has the responsibility to gather the intake data and offered a closed-choice design to promote specificity and force a narrow selection of director, teacher, office assistant, volunteer, or other. The question did not indicate to choose one selection, and the "other" choice asked respondents to be specific regarding who gathers the data. The question was answered by all respondents and produced 9 response categories negating the narrow selection; however, results reflected that most often it is the director who gathers intake data.

Question 12 asked respondents to indicate **when** they gather intake data and were given the three choices most often used in the review of literature on successful programs and an "other" category. The vast majority of program staff collect data upon a client's entry into the program (see Table 4). Question 13 inquired about who **analyzes** the intake data and offered a closed-choice design due to the variety of providers and possible titles that might be encountered. Choices were director, teacher, assistants, or a combination. The question did not indicate to choose only one

selection, and the combination choice asked them to be specific regarding who analyzes the data. The question was answered by all respondents and produced seven response categories.

Table 4

Policies for Collecting and Analyzing Intake Data

Collecting Intake Data - Questions 11, 12, 13	(n = 117)	Frequency
Who Gathers-Question 11		
Director	24	(20.5%)
Teacher	21	(17.95)
Teacher and Other Office Assistant	18	(15.4%)
Office Assistant	17	(14.5%)
Combination Director and Teacher	11	(9.4%)
Other Staff	9	(7.7%)
Teacher and Volunteer	2	(1.7%)
Volunteer	1	(0.9%)
Teacher and Staff	1	(0.9%)
When Gathered-Question 12		
Upon Entry	104	(88.9%)
Within Three Weeks	7	(6.0%)
Other, not revealed	5	(4.3%)
Prior to Entry	1	(0.9%)
Who Analyzes-Question 13		
Director and Teacher/Tutor	50	(42.7%)
Director	34	(29.1%)
Teacher	21	(17.9%)
Teachers and Staff	7	(6.0%)
Assistants and Office Staff	3	(2.6%)
Counselor	1	(0.9%)
Unspecified Staff	1	(0.9%)

Question 20 continued to ask questions about program policies. Four parts of

question 20 dealt with attendance, requirements for entry and exiting a program, waiting lists, methods for contacting "no shows," and general homework policies. Two parts of question 20 dealt with stop-out policies. In order to obtain the clearest picture of the intake process, all six questions were designed with the response choices of "yes," "yes with details," or "no response." Fifty-six (48.3%) (N=116) programs do not have **attendance requirements**, while 36 (31.0%) require a certain number of hours per week, and 24 (20.7%) set hours per month. Procedures for handling a **waiting list** were almost evenly divided with 57 (48.7%) (N=117) maintaining a list, and 56 (47.9%) not maintaining a list. Four (3.4%) have requirements for being placed on the list. The last part of question 20 regarded **homework policies**. The majority, 93 (80.9%) (N=115) assign homework while 22 (19.1%) do not.

The majority of programs (64%) allow a **stop out** period in their program policies, but do not have a policy for providing continued support for student learning . Also, the majority of programs do not maintain names of students who have "stopped out" and evidently drop them from the rolls. It is not known how much time elapses before students are dropped. Table 5 summarizes data collected about the stop out period.

Table 5

Stop Out Policies

Program Policy- Question 20	n	Frequency
Requesting-20a	115	
Personal Request	73	(63.5%)
Do Not Track Stop Outs	33	(28.7%)
Formal Application or Agreement	9	(7.8%)
Continue Instruction-20b	117	
Books Sent Home	32	(27.4%)
Do Not Provide Any Instruction	22	(18.8%)
Various Materials Sent Home	6	(5.1%)
Home Visits	2	(1.7%)
Contact No Shows-20c	116	
Call and/or Mail Inquiries	58	(50.0%)
Call When Time Permits	49	(42.2%)
Contact, unspecified	4	(3.4%)
Do Not Contact	5	(4.3%)

Institutional barriers: Program practices

Question 8 asked respondents to rank the uses of intake data, using one as the highest use to five as the lowest use of intake data. This question was designed as a 5 item ranking inquiry so that selections could be compared clearly from the forced

choices and an "other" response in which a personalized use for intake data could be described. The question did not indicate that respondents needed to use all five choices and many did not; therefore, the percentages of responses do not total 100% of respondents. The number of respondents for this question ranged from 89 to 111. This inconsistency resulted from some respondents leaving some ranking levels blank, or from marking more than one choice as the first or highest use for intake data. See Table 6 for a comparison of the ranked uses of intake data.

TABLE 6

Uses of Intake Data from High (1) to Low (5)

Ranking-Question 8	n	Frequency
Ranked first	111	
Identify Student Needs		51 (45.9%)
Funding Reports		38 (34.2%)
Spot Enrollment Trends		10 (9.0%)
Determine Program Offerings		6 (5.4%)
Staff Development		5 (4.5%)
Other Use		1 (0.9%)
Ranked second	107	
Determine Program Offerings		32 (29.9%)
Identify Student Needs		31 (29.0%)
Spot Enrollment Trends		21 (19.6%)
Funding Reports		15 (14.0%)
Staff Development		7 (6.5%)
Other Use		1 (0.9%)

Table 6, continued

Ranking, Question 8	n	Frequency
Ranked third	99	
Determine Program Offerings		28 (28.3%)
Funding Reports		21 (21.2%)
Spot Enrollment Trends		20 (20.2%)
Identify Students Needs		18 (18.2%)
Staff Development		12 (12.1%)
Other Use		0 (0.0%)
Ranked fourth	93	
Spot Enrollment Trends		31 (33.3%)
Staff Development		23 (24.7%)
Determine Program Offerings		22 (23.7%)
Funding Reports		14 (15.1%)
Identify Student Needs		3 (3.2%)
Other Use		0 (0.0%)
Ranked fifth	85	
Staff Development		45 (50.6%)
Spot Enrollment Trends		12 (13.5%)
Funding Reports		12 (13.5%)
Determine Program Offerings		11 (12.4%)
Identify Student Needs		4 (8.0%)
Other Use		1 (1.1%)

Question 10 dealt with a perceived connection between the intake procedure and institutional barriers to attendance and was answered by all respondents. Respondents were asked to choose among three closed-choices to indicate **if intake data can help them** identify and address barriers to students' attendance. The survey found that an overwhelming majority, 89 (76.1%) (N=117), indicated the intake data do

help to identify and address barriers to attendance. Twenty respondents (17.1%) were not sure, and 8 (6.8%) indicated that intake data do not help them identify and address barriers to attendance.

Respondents were asked to indicate through open-ended remarks in order to capture the best picture about how their programs **recognize achievement** in Question 17. The majority, 96 (82.1%) (N=117) have public displays, 8 (6.8%) dispense tangible rewards, and 2 (1.7%) mention "other" ways to show student achievement. It should be noted, however, that 11 (9.4%) report they do not have a formal way to recognize achievement.

Section III: Dispositional Barriers to Attendance, RQ 2: Nonattendance Stemming from Psychological, Attitude, Personality, or Beliefs about Ability to Learn

Dispositional barriers: Attitude, personality, ability to learn

Survey questions that reflect the second research question--do intake data help to identify and address barriers to attendance--were included under dispositional barriers and were addressed in questions 15, 16, and 19. Question 15 asked about the questions program staff ask during the **exchange of information** at intake (see Table 7). For ease of data collection and to narrow the responses categories because of the variety of providers, closed choices of "never," "often," or "usually" were offered for seven questions dealing with the exchange. Some participants did not choose to answer

every part of Question 15 resulting in an unequal total number of responses for this item.

TABLE 7

Information Collected Regarding Potential Dispositional Barriers

Information Exchanged-Question 15	n	Number and Frequency of Exchange		
		Never	Often	Usually
Reason for Attending	116	1 (0.9%)	26 (22.4%)	89 (76.7%)
Educational Goals	116	0 (0.0%)	31 (8.3%)	85 (22.7%)
Have an Acquaintance in Class	116	47 (40.5%)	33 (28.4%)	36 (31.0%)
Belief in Personal Abilities	116	29 (25.0%)	43 (37.1%)	44 (37.9%)
Level of Comfort With Teacher Attention	115	29 (25.2%)	45 (39.1%)	41 (35.7%)
Expectations From Class	115	6 (5.2%)	51 (44.3%)	58 (50.4%)
Level of Satisfaction With Class	113	13 (11.5%)	65 (57.5%)	35 (30.9%)

Question 16, which was open-ended to promote a variety of responses, asked respondents what procedures they offer to **encourage attendance**. Twenty-five (21.4%) (N=117) cited the program's services and building on student success as ways to encourage attendance. However, 21 (17.9%) reported no special ways to encourage attendance are used. Other procedures or methods to encourage attendance were cited: 21 (17.9%) program staff use tangible rewards along with motivational lessons

and guest speakers, 20 (17.1%) rely on routine, direct contact, 13 (11.1%) create a concerned, caring atmosphere, 11 (9.4%) have in place a mentoring or support group, and 6 (5.1%) use tangible rewards.

Item 19 was a series of open-ended questions about **when** a program staff finds out about **students' backgrounds and their needs**. It was intended that through question 19, it could be determined whether the intake data collection was a one-time event, or if data collection was regarded as dynamic and the data were referred to more than just at the student's initial visit. Survey results were grouped into the following categories: asked during intake, found out casually during class, or did not ask (see Table 8). It should be noted that three programs reported that they use an informal test to determine self-esteem level.

TABLE 8

How Information is Collected Regarding Potential Dispositional Barriers

Information Requested-Question 19		How Gathered			
	n	During Intake	In Class	Both	Do Not Ask
Level of Family Support	117	48 (41.0%)	23 (19.7%)	7 (6.0%)	39 (33.3%)
Past Educational Experience	117	91 (77.8%)	14 (12.0%)	0 (0.0%)	12 (10.3%)
Feelings about Success/Failures	116	36 (31.0%)	45 (38.8%)	0 (0.0%)	35 (30.2%)
Level of Self-Esteem	115	34 (29.6%)	48 (41.7%)	0 (0.0%)	33 (28.7%)

Section IV: Situational Barriers to Attendance, RQ 2: Nonattendance Stemming from Child Care Issues, Conflicting Work Schedules, or Lack of Transportation

Situational barriers: Child care and transportation

Situational barriers reflect reasons for nonattendance stemming from child care issues, conflicting work schedules, or lack of transportation (Sticht, McDonald & Erickson, 1998). One question was included to determine how program staff handle this barrier.

Question 18 asked about determining students' **need for child care and transportation** by answering "yes" or "no," and then asked in a second part if programs **provide** either or both, or none. Seventy-four (63.2%) (N=117) take time during the intake to ask about child care and transportation needs, 36 (30.8%) do not ask about these needs, and 7 (6.0%) rely on students to request child care or transportation services. Sixty-three (53.8%) (N=117) of the respondents provide neither child care nor transportation, 28 (23.9%) provide both, 13 (11.1%) provide child care only, and 13 (11.1%) provide transportation only.

Section V: Closing Comments Regarding Barriers to Attendance

The open-ended final survey question, number 22, offered respondents the opportunity to state their opinions regarding **what keeps students attending**. Thirty respondents submitted comments and several indicated more than one comment. Similar responses were grouped into clusters reflected in Table 9. Several

explicit examples of motivational activities were submitted, as well as comments regarding retention issues in general (see Appendix F).

TABLE 9

Closing Comments Regarding Barriers to Attendance

Comments-Question 22	(n = 30)	Frequency
Build a Relationship between Teacher and Student	14	(0.47%)
Create a Family Atmosphere	11	(0.36%)
Provide Great Teaching	10	(0.33%)
Provide Continuous Motivational Efforts	9	(0.30%)
Acknowledge Every Level of Completion	6	(0.20%)
Build Respect for Tutors' Efforts	3	(0.10%)
Allow Occasional Food and Parties	2	(0.06%)
Produce a Class Newsletter	2	(0.06%)
Create a Mobile Lab and Library	1	(0.03%)
Provide Child Care	1	(0.03%)

Note. Respondents could submit more than one comment.

Summary

Texas adult basic education, General Education Development, and literacy education programs were surveyed in this study to determine the nature of their intake procedures and to discover if intake data can identify and address barriers to attendance. Two-hundred-eleven responses were received, of which 94 respondents indicated they did not want to participate. One-hundred- seventeen returned usable surveys, and this represents a 31% response rate.

The survey results were reported as frequencies to reflect the research questions: 1) what is the nature of intake procedures, and 2) how do the intake data identify and address barriers to attendance. The questions were aligned with the definitions of the categories of attendance barriers as defined in the literature review. The answers were reported as frequencies of response with narratives and tables. Six programs submitted samples of intake forms, and one included samples of homework assigned. Survey results reveal that some elements of the intake process and decisions regarding program practices may be creating institutional, dispositional, and/or situational barriers to attendance.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

A 22-item survey was sent to 374 Literacy, ABE and GED programs in Texas in order to determine the nature of intake procedures and how intake data is used to identify and address barriers to attendance. This survey instrument was developed for this study to determine if intake data could be better utilized to counter barriers to attendance. One-hundred-seventeen useable surveys were returned from the 211 responses received with 94 respondents indicating they did not want to participate in the study, yielding an overall response rate of 31%.

Summary and Discussion of Results

The identifying data questions not only helped this researcher to understand the type of programs respondents represent, but also allowed insight into the task asked of those serving adults in basic education programs in Texas. In question four, the respondents reported that they see an average of 30 students per week, and the

majority (54%) appear to see over 50 students each week. It is not possible to determine if the number of students served (question four) depends upon the type of student served by a particular program (question seven). Most funding sources are federal, state, local school districts, or a combination of all three. The majority (35%) of the programs serve ABE and GED, as well as ESL students.

RQ 1: What is the nature of intake procedures?

The survey was designed to elicit information from programs regarding the nature of their intake forms with questions that clustered around program policies for interviewing practices and use of the data collected during the intake procedures. Respondents appear to have established intake procedures for staff to follow, but it is not known if these procedures are contained in a formal guide or known through practice.

Program Policies for Intake Procedures

Interviewing practices.

In response to question number nine, the majority of respondents (96%) use a combination of written and oral interviewing practices. Interviewers' judgment is paramount in deciding which program of study a student should begin, which type of curriculum delivery system is best for a student, if an assignment to an outside mentor is needed, and also if any referrals to outside agencies or collaborative partners are in order. The respondents proportionally report in question 11 that directors, teachers,

or teachers with office assistant help conduct the intake interviews. The next most common choice for who is assigned to handle the interviewing of students is office assistants. The categories of "teachers with office assistant help" and "office assistants," when combined, represent the majority (30%) of interviewers for programs. All respondents answered question 13 regarding who analyzes the intake data, and the majority (43%) report that directors and teachers complete this task. The decisions for students based on the intake form are only as accurate as the information that the interviewer decided to include, or as weak as omission of students' remarks that were deemed unimportant to include.

The vast majority of respondents (89%) reported that their programs gather intake data only upon a student's entry into the program which could reflect an attitude that intake data is not dynamic, or fluid, but static. In the majority of cases (see Table 4) questions are asked when a student first walks through the door when shyness, embarrassment, or nervousness might be present. It is not unreasonable to assume that people are uncomfortable when talking to strangers about their personal level of academic ability.

Use of intake data.

Respondents consistently chose, under use of intake data, the option "to address student needs" as one of the top three out of five choices they were asked to rank (see Table 6) . However, the next highest use for intake data is for funding reports; this does not reflect the most efficient use of intake data to counter barriers to attendance as shown by this and other studies of program intake data (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992;

Guisier & Molek, 1992; Quigley, 1993;). Although intake data can be a vital component of refunding proposals, low retention rates can also be a refunding consideration. The use of intake data to determine program offerings did command the third highest use for intake data, although this use was expected to rank higher based on previous research and literature reviews. Another interesting finding is the use of intake data to determine staff development needs as the fourth highest use, with a large number of respondents relegating staff development to the fifth ranking (lowest).

Program Policies for Intake Assessments

Informal Assessments.

The majority of programs (52.9%) note through open comments in question 14a that informal testing and teacher observation are used to determine learning preferences. The short answers did not describe the choice or style (written or oral) for informal testing; however, fifteen respondents did report using a commercial test to determine learning preference (see Table 2). Nineteen percent of the respondents do not ask their students about experience with learning disabilities. More than half of respondents rely on self-disclosure alone to make themselves aware of a student's history with learning disabilities and only two programs report that they give formal learning disability screening instruments (see Table 2). One survey respondent did note that this area is being handled inadequately by his/her program and it is making the effort to include more training in the area of teaching students with learning disabilities.

Although the majority of respondents (see Table 2) assess students for initial goals, only three-fourths of those report that reviewing and/or adjusting students' stated goals are completed as needed or upon subtest completion (question 14c). Very few programs report a regular system for updating goals. This might indicate that goals do not drive curriculum choices, and also that goals are not seen as dynamic, but static.

Standardized Assessments.

Respondents generally use standardized, commercial tests of various kinds to determine academic ability, and nearly half did mention the TABE test specifically in question 14b. This finding reflects that in the majority (88%) of cases, assessment is being completed with a valid and reliable instrument. No respondents mentioned the CASAS or BEST test. It is noteworthy that 88% of respondents use a standardized test to determine academic ability at entry with 40% indicating the use of the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) test. It should be noted that this survey was completed prior to the 1999 TEA mandate to use the TABE and Basic English Skills Test (BEST) (TEA, 1999b), and programs would have been just beginning to implement training in these areas. Results would be different if the survey were conducted after 1999. Although the survey did not ask when ability tests were given, several programs did note that these tests are given upon the student's entry. Only three programs mentioned using portfolios to measure growth in academic ability.

The overall results of the survey regarding program assessment policies reflect very teacher-centered practices. This may be the result of the need for expediency due

to high volumes of students, funding inadequacies to support necessary support staff, or perhaps the need for staff development in certain areas.

RQ 2: How do the intake data identify and address barriers to attendance?

Although the majority of respondents (76%) feel intake information can help them identify barriers to attendance in question 10, 24% replied that they were not sure if it did, or replied that it does not help them identify barriers to attendance.

Institutional Barriers

Survey results reveal that some elements of the intake process such as which staff completes the interview and timing of the interview, as well as some elements of the program's structure such as assessment decisions or use of stop-out period, may be creating institutional barriers to attendance. Institutional barriers revolve around instructional methods, policies, practices or requirements of the program. The choices for survey questions which would probe for possible institutional barriers to attendance are described in Appendix D. Programs may not use intake data as a source to make program design decisions and may base those decisions on teacher discretion or budget restraints, or both.

Program structures.

Teachers determine class setting and curriculum delivery methods in the majority of cases (56%), although some respondents did note that funding restrictions heavily influence this decision (question 14d). It was intended that this question be

answered by those programs which have the choice of individual study or group study and a choice of curriculum sources to offer students, and how they decide which setting and curriculum choice would best match the student.

Only one program noted that it relies on the results of a learning style test to make the class setting determination (see Table 2). Programs do not consider learning style when choosing a setting or type of curriculum delivery method for the majority of students. The majority of programs (60%) rely on self-disclosure of learning disabilities which may or may not be disclosed. It is not known how self-disclosure of a learning disability is addressed. One possible constraint of these practices may be the amount of new learning a student may absorb, and the possibility that negative feelings about education may be reinforced.

However, the survey data revealed a much more student-centered strategy for determining the hours for operation (question 14g) and the efforts made to recognize student achievement. The intent of the question about hours of operation was to reveal how the decision was made, but most responses just listed the hours that the program is open. From noting how many centers are open in the evenings as well as some hours in the day, it appears that programs do consider the needs of students in this area.

A variety of nonacademic instruction, referred to as supplementary curriculum, is provided by the majority of programs, some programs listing several types of instruction beyond basic skills. The types of nonacademic instruction provided students are delineated in Table 3. Some interesting choices included how to buy a house and

direct instruction in job interviewing skills. It is important to note that no one mentioned instruction in communication skills, learning to be self-directed, discussion of intrinsic or extrinsic direction (locus of control), the identification and use of goals, or building and maintaining relationships, although some programs reported instruction in self-esteem issues.

The vast majority of programs (82%) recognize student achievement through public displays including bulletin boards, newsletters, complimentary pictures made, dinners provided, and praise from peers. The open-ended responses in question 17 reflect the time and effort that goes into preparing ceremonies and parties and genuine pride felt by program staff for their students (see Appendix F). Many programs include portfolio creation and display as a part of graduation ceremonies. Ten percent, however, report they do not have a formal way to recognize achievement and instead rely on teacher praise and encouragement for students.

Handling stop-outs.

The survey results of question 20c show that almost three-fourths of the programs allow an open exit, open reentry policy, but only nine respondents report they see a need for a "stopping out agreement" (see Table 5). The majority of programs (74.4%) might send books or materials home with students but report that they have no system in place to monitor this home-based learning. Several programs (18.8%) note that they do not provide home-based instruction in any form during stop out. Even Start programs have a system set up to provide home visits through a

home-health teacher as part of their program, and that person acts as a contact for homework assignments (TEA, 1999b).

All the programs report that they try to contact students when they do not come to class (see Table 5). Half of the programs (N=116) have a formal procedure, usually a postcard mailed followed by a phone call. The other half said they call only if time permits. No one mentioned peer leaders or mentors or volunteers being given this duty. The vast majority (81%) assign homework to current students, but not students on a waiting list or those who are in a stop-out mode. Homework has to be assessed, and with teachers and office staff apparently conducting the majority of intake interviews, as well as teachers creating multilevel curriculum development and lesson plans, added to the volume of students that enter programs, calls to students may receive low priority.

Dispositional barriers

Another set of questions probed further into personal issues which might affect students' ability to continue a program of instruction referred to as dispositional barriers. As reflected in questions 15 and 19, the majority of programs find out about dispositional barriers from a combination of questions during intake and during class time (see Tables 7, 8). Programs do ask questions about reasons for attending, expectations of the class, and overall satisfaction. However, almost half the programs do not ask if a student has an acquaintance in class, and one quarter of the programs do not ask about the student's level of belief in his or her personal abilities, level of family

support, feelings about past success/failure, or if the student is comfortable with the amount of teacher attention given. Three-quarters of respondents report ascertaining the level of self-esteem of students, and a corresponding number offer instruction in this area, but only three programs use an informal test to measure self-esteem. Some programs report that students are asked directly if he or she would benefit from a referral to an outside agency.

Situational barriers

Situational barriers to attendance in this study, question 18, revolved around providing care for children and preteens when the student is at class, as well as providing transportation to get to and from class. More than half of the programs ask about these issues during the intake process, but less than one-fourth provide both child care and transportation. One-fourth of the respondents provide either child care or transportation. These issues are addressed by Even Start programs more readily because of their emphasis on family literacy and the fact that their programs include children in the program along with the parent (TEA, 1999b). Many programs report collaborating with local bus companies that donate bus passes for student use.

Closing comments regarding barriers to attendance

Programs were asked in question 22 to offer open-ended comments regarding how they address barriers to attendance (see Appendix F). The top three most reported strategies to counter students dropping out of programs deal with students' feelings about the program's atmosphere, and students' feelings about the teachers. Only six programs acknowledge that completion of levels of study can build students'

self-esteem which is noted in the literature as self-motivating. It should be noted that one-fourth of the respondents say they never ask about the level of comfort with the teacher, and one-third do not address self-esteem issues at all. Only one program says that child care is the most important way to address barriers to attendance.

Findings Consistent with Past Research

To Identify Barriers

Results obtained from this "Nature of Intake Procedures" survey are consistent with previous research about identifying and addressing barriers to attendance (Sticht et al., 1998). Successful programs combine intake questionnaires that would alert staff to possible barriers to attendance with academic testing in order to identify at-risk students (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992; Guisier & Molek, 1992; Quigley, 1993). One-hundred-three (88.0%) (N=117) respondents in this study administer standardized testing and all respondents describe using an intake instrument that includes questions that elicit information to identify possible barriers to attendance to some degree.

To Address Barriers

Institutional Barriers

Findings in this study are not consistent with prior literature reviews regarding addressing institutional barriers to attendance. The majority of respondents for question 10 (76%) realize that intake data can identify and help address barriers to attendance, and respondents report using the intake data to determine course offerings

and meet student needs, but this is inconsistent with later reporting (see Table 2, question 14a) which shows the majority of respondents rely on teacher discretion to determine learning preference, appropriate setting for students, and the type of curriculum delivery system best suited for students. Literature reviews in the area of program design show that successful programs with high retention rates base instructional decisions on student perception of needs, the results of various assessment tests for multiple intelligences, writing samples, and learning style preference surveys (Hayes & Valentine, 1989; Kasworm & Marienau, 1997; Kerka, 1995; Solorzano, 1993; Sticht et al., 1998; Yaffee & Williams, 1998). Prior studies by Garrison (1997) show student choice in curriculum and program design to be related highly to persistence and retention.

Quigley's (1993) research found more successful programs will take up to three weeks to glean valuable data about students, not relying on initial contact information to make critical curriculum decisions. This survey data showed only 6.0% (N=117) of programs extend data gathering past initial contact in question 12. The survey results show that programs do not view the completed intake as a tool to structure learning once initial data is extracted from it, as evidenced by survey results showing that the majority of programs (44%) review and adjust original student goals only as needed after subtest completion which is contrary to findings by Daines (1993) and Quigley (1992, 1993).

The majority (89%) of respondents assess students' academic abilities during the initial intake process; this is counter to recommendations by Kasworm and Marienau

(1997), Sticht et al. (1998), and Metz (1989) who report that the less stress and embarrassment initially placed on students produces higher retention rates if assessment is conducted after rapport and some level of confidence is established between the student and the program.

The majority of respondents (see Table 2, question 14e) rely on student self-disclosure of previous history with learning disabilities and this is consistent with past research (Ross & Smith, 1990). Many respondents volunteered open comments about the frustration with lack of knowledge in the area of learning disabilities which is consistent with research by White and Polson (1999).

The majority of respondents in this study allow stop out periods by student request, but only a small number have a formal agreement regarding the stop out period or have a system in place to arrange for instruction and assessment during this time (see Table 5, question 20). This lack of structure for the stop out periods is counter to numerous studies and surveys regarding the occurrence and use of stop out periods (Belzer, 1998; Kerka, 1995; Quigley, 1993; Tracy-Mumford et al., 1994).

The survey findings are consistent with previous literature reviews and reports regarding countering institutional barriers to attendance by relying on student requests to determine days and hours of operation and providing job skill training (Kerka, 1995; Yaffee & Williams, 1998).

Dispositional Barriers

Dispositional barriers stem from a student's personal attitude about his or her belief system such as ability to learn, and level of self-esteem. According to research, programs can identify dispositional barriers to attendance during the intake procedure by asking students personal questions that can give an indication of their level of self-esteem, motivation level, and their belief about the locus of control in their life (Sticht et al., 1998).

A successful program called Settlement House (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992) takes care to mark intake responses to questions that probe for dispositional barriers as positive or negative with the negative marks indicating at-risk factors for dropping out. A major positive factor in student retention is having acquaintances in class (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992), yet this study found that nearly one-half of the intake processes do not ask about having friends in class. The importance of support from acquaintances or family is evident in the exchange of information during intakes at the TIU Adult Education Program (Goss, 1992), and at a large metropolitan Even Start Family Literacy program (Yaffe & Williams, 1998), as well as at Project Drop-In (Guisier & Molek, 1992), yet a full one-third of this study's respondents reported they do not ask about the level of family support of students.

Although 105 of the respondents in this study do ask about previous educational history during the intake process (see Table 8), 12 respondents do not ask this vital question. Not asking this question is inconsistent with Quigley's (1993) research which showed the importance of knowing and addressing the feelings of students' regarding

past educational experiences and how this acknowledgment can lead to higher retention rates. Quigley's research (1992a,1992b, 1993) points to discussing and validating students' prior experience with education as good practice and may be one of the most motivational segments a program can implement.

Reports by the Settlement House (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992) and more recently by Yaffee and Williams (1998) show that determining a student's lack of belief in personal abilities, dissatisfaction with teachers, and not seeing the relevance in curriculum choices are factors which can lead to early withdrawal, yet one-fourth of this study's respondents do not inquire about these issues. Questions about students' feelings about past successes or failures and their overall level of self-esteem are not asked by one-third of the respondents, yet research by Cohen et al. (1995), Goertzel and Keeley, Garrison (1997) and Yaffee and Williams (1998) tied low self-esteem to nonattendance. A survey of Even Start participants by Yaffe and Williams (1998) found building self-esteem to be one of the major reasons for joining and continuing the program.

Situational Barriers

More than half of the respondents ask students if child care or transportation is needed, and these findings are congruent with other program studies in which the importance of identifying these barriers are deemed vital for success: Settlement House (Goertzel & Keeley, 1992), Project Drop In (Guisier & Molek, 1992), Project SPARK

(Marshall, 1992), an Even Start Family Literacy program (Yaffe & Williams, 1998), and the TIU Adult Education Program (Goss, 1992).

Interestingly, slightly less than one-fourth of the programs provide for both needs even though researchers into program effectiveness deem these situational barriers as the most likely reasons students stop attending classes (Quigley, 1993; Solorzano, 1993; Sticht, et al. 1998; Tracy-Mumford, et al. 1994).

Limitations of the Study

The majority of responses appear to have yielded valid data; however, some survey items did not elicit the responses intended by the researcher. Some questions were left blank by the respondents and several respondents did not answer a vital question about the use of intake data in the manner intended as illustrated and explained in the section on the use of intake data.

Response Rate

Out of 374 surveys mailed, 211 responded, yet 94 programs indicated they did not want to participate. Even though a return rate of 60% assures that nonresponders will not have any impact on the validity of a study (Mangione, 1995), it was felt that nonresponders in this survey would not significantly impact validity. Many noted that

the program had recently been closed due to lack of teachers or volunteers. The majority gave no reason why they declined to complete the survey. It is felt that the release of the survey could have interfered with the demands for compiling funding reports due during the summer months, and program directors simply did not have time to complete the survey. Many of those who declined to respond asked to see survey results.

Questions Regarding Population Served

The decision to mix types of programs might be criticized due to the different nature of the levels of curriculum. Through research (see Quigley, 1993; Solorzano, 1993; Sticht et al., 1998; Tracy-Mumford et al., 1994), as well as working knowledge, it appears that all programs face the dilemma of students who drop out once they have started a program, and it was felt that these survey results might be useful to all types of programs. Question seven allowed programs to be identified according to population served and should have had definite categories or closed-choices instead of self-description, so that the categories could be more reliably compared for study. However, it may be that more programs than anticipated do have such a diverse mixture of populations at various levels of study that any comparison of survey results between populations could not be reliable.

Questions Regarding the Use of Intake Data

It is not clear from the results of survey question 12, "when do you gather the intake data," means that a program does or does not have an intake procedure that is dynamic in nature. A question should have been included to see if programs return to the intake data after the initial interview, how often, and for what purpose. Also, a question should have been included regarding the day allocated to administer initial interviews (first day or after academic assessment). Some programs are flexible, allowing entry any day the program is open, and some programs set aside a specific day to take interviews, and some even have a certain day to start a program of study which is never the same day as the intake. These questions could have been included in number eight which asked for a ranking of intake uses.

Although the closed-choice style of questions made it quick for the respondent, the instructions were misunderstood by some respondents and resulted in question 12 not being as useable as anticipated. Some respondents did not understand that only one rank per choice was allowed and assigned the same rank to several choices.

Questions Regarding How Program Structure Decisions Are Made

Again, misinterpreted instructions resulted in unanticipated responses for question 14 as well. Question 14 asked how programs determine a student's learning preference, overall academic ability, when to review goals, which class setting to use, and if there is a history of learning difficulties. In question 14, the researcher wanted

to know what the deciding factors were to review goals monthly or yearly. Many respondents just listed the decision that was made, not explaining how it was made. This question also appeared to take too much time for the respondents to complete, and a series of closed-choices could have been designed to alleviate both problems.

Questions Regarding Stop-Out Periods

Most programs are designed to be open-entry, open-exit programs. The survey question was intended to determine if programs value the down time or stop-out time of students. Fifty-five programs (47%) (N=117) report that they continue instruction during this time period, but did not elaborate how this is done or who is responsible for assessing lessons, and 40 programs report they continue instruction by giving out books and other materials but again, did not report who is responsible for assessing lessons. This stop out period affects 95 out of the 117 responding programs, yet only nine report setting up a formal application for stop-out or make any agreement about how this continued instruction is to be handled. This discrepancy is so large that perhaps a more detailed question about stop-out instruction should have been included.

Value of Other Response for Supplementary Instruction

Question 21 asked respondents to name additional curriculum beyond basic skills provided students. Results include 61 (52.1%) (N=117) programs checking "other areas" with no elaboration provided making this data meaningless for other researchers. Question design was the major factor in this problem area.

Conclusions

This study found that the vast majority of program directors, administrators, and teachers are aware that intake data can help them to identify barriers to attendance. However, the majority report that budgetary constraints, site selection restrictions, and lack of qualified teachers and/or volunteers are more likely to determine assessment tools used, the level of attention from teachers, design of curriculum, curriculum delivery methods, hours of operation, and auxiliary services offered by adult basic education programs. Programs rank determining staff development needs as the lowest and second lowest use for intake data. Staff development is crucial for staying current with teaching methods and technology changes, and it was expected that this use would have ranked higher.

The majority of programs experience a large number of stop-out students due to the nature of the open-entry/open-exit ABE structure which comes from the dynamic nature of the students' lives. Program directors and administrators are interested in finding answers to counter the problem of low retention rates and appear frustrated by the number of students who need to stop-out and the lack of progress during stop-out periods. Many questions that might alert staff to possible dropouts and stop-outs, or at-risk students, are not presented to students, but it is not clear from the survey results why programs do not incorporate such questions into the intake process. The majority of programs do not offer child care or transportation to and from classes which was the only situational barrier addressed in the study.

Implications for Future Practice and Research

The exchange of information between student and interviewer in Adult Basic Education programs could be better utilized to identify and address barriers to attendance.

Possible Future Practice

The majority of the respondents in this study do not appear to base curriculum decisions on intake data, especially in the areas of learning disabilities and self-esteem, nor do the majority of respondents utilize a formal agreement or system for continued instruction during the stop-out period (breaks in time from formal class time). Changes in the use of intake data in these areas might allow programs to minimize their effect on retention.

The lack of a policy or procedure in place to continue instruction during stopping-out time for students is a definite institutional barrier to attendance because the need to temporarily stop out of formal instruction is a well-known occurrence for students in adult basic education programs. By not utilizing this down time in any way, programs may negate all the time and effort that has gone into that student before the stop-out occurred. Down time, or the stopping-out period, does have value and could be utilized more efficiently to help students reach their goals. A fluid, or dynamic intake process could positively acknowledge this time, and could have a procedure in place to

handle this phase of education beforehand, thus avoiding the negativity associated to quitting or feelings of failure.

The results from the intake session do not appear to be viewed as dynamic in nature, i.e., returning to the initial intake to measure success, goals, to review questions that might have been ignored through embarrassment initially, or to affirm changed feelings. Regularly scheduled times to have students review initial responses may be affirming, or it might allow student to add or update vital information.

Solutions might be found to counter the barriers to attendance that plague many ABE programs by participating in teacher action research regarding best practices for intake methods, more collaboration with community services, and more reliance on distance learning. Through planning and collaboration it may be possible to restructure stop-out periods into alternative instruction periods for appropriate students.

Students could be offered a choice of curriculum delivery methods based on individual learning styles and personalized study for students with learning disabilities by using daily, weekly, or monthly class time schedules. Certain students could participate in distance learning via Internet, programmed text, live remote interactive classes, through the inclusion of prerecorded video lessons, or established cable television programs into existing curriculum development.

The shortage of qualified teachers could be addressed by having students receive instruction at remote sites by a teacher across town or across the state by collaborating with numerous local colleges and universities who have these distance

learning facilities in place. Office staff and volunteers roles could change to become more like a teacher assistant or facilitator by manning the various forms of curriculum delivery methods. Mentor systems could become Internet-based by collaborating with graduate programs in various fields throughout the state.

Possible Future Research

Studies could be conducted comparing retention rates for students attending programs that utilize a dynamic intake approach to creating curriculum for ABE students to retention rates of students whose programs design a more site-based curriculum. Additionally, programs that design and implement a curriculum for the inevitable stop-out period should be studied to determine the most effective system or best practices to use during stop-out, as well as to weigh the cost versus benefits of such a curriculum.

A future study should be conducted to analyze exclusively the act of gathering intake data. The approach, the timing, the qualifications of the person interviewing potential students, and the procedure for analyzing the intake data needs to be studied so that these procedures do not inadvertently become institutional barriers to attendance. It is important to the continued success and funding of Adult Education Programs to study and analyze the best practices for intake procedures.

Summary

This chapter presented a summary of the results of the study, limitations, a discussion of the results and findings consistent with past research, as well as implications for future research and practice. The respondents in the survey presented in this study do not use the intake process to counter barriers to attendance as effectively as they could, and some current practices revealed in this study seem to be contributing to institutional barriers to attendance. This chapter also addressed the low response rate, misinterpretation of vital questions, and highlighted areas of program practices that are not consistent with retention research. Future research that might offset this study's limitations were examined as well as future studies in those areas where practices revealed seemed inconsistent with practices suggested by previous research. Further studies would expand the area of best practices for intake procedures.

Every person who walks through the door begins to cost the program dollars, and the cost increases with each person who does not stay long enough to complete stated goals, but dynamic intake procedures along with curriculum development based on intake data could help to counter this phenomenon. It is vital that program directors and teachers and staff understand that every word spoken, process initiated, and every atmosphere created at the initial contact has the potential to affect student retention as an institutional barrier to attendance.

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APPENDIX A

PRIOR SCHOOLING AND SELF-PERCEPTION INVENTORY

RANKING 7 AS GREATEST/HIGHEST

How valuable do you believe this program will be for you?							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How different do you think this program will be from school?							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How well **will** you do in:							
Math?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reading?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Social Studies?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Science?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In school, how well did you do in:							
Math?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Reading?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Social Studies?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Science?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How helpful will:							
The teachers be here?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The counselors be here?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Your friends at home be?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Back in school, how helpful were:							
The teachers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The counselors?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Your friends?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How easy do you think it will be to make friends here?							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How helpful do you think these new friends will be?							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
How easy was it to make friends in school?							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Right now, if I had to say **how I think I will do I this program**, I would say:							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Taken from:

Quigley, B. A. (1993). Retaining reluctant learners in ABE through the student intake period. ERIC Digest. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse [367 890].

APPENDIX B

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APPENDIX C
SURVEY OF THE NATURE OF INTAKE PROCEDURES

I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. FOR INTERNAL USE: PROGRAM CODE:_____ RECEIVED:_____
ENTERED:_____

2. PRIMARY POSITION: (a) Director___ (b)Teacher_____

(c) Other_____
Office Assistant? Volunteer? Staff? Please indicate.

3.
PHONE:_____E-MAIL:_____
Area Code-Number

4. LEARNERS SERVED IN A WEEK BY YOUR PROGRAM:
(a) 2-10 _____ (b)11-30_____ (c)31-50 _____ (d) over 50 _____

5. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF GED DEGREES COMPLETED LAST YEAR:_____

6. SOURCE(S) OF PROGRAM FUNDING:
_____

7. TYPE OF PROGRAM: (a) GED(ASE)_____ (b) Literacy(ABE) _____

(c) both _____ (d) other_____

8. PLEASE RANK FROM 1 (HIGH) TO 5 (LOW) THE USES OF YOUR INTAKE DATA:

(a) Spotting enrollment trends_____ (b) Funding reports_____

(c) Identifying student needs_____ (d) Staff development_____

(e) Determining program offerings_____ (f) Other _____

APPENDIX C
SURVEY OF THE NATURE OF INTAKE PROCEDURES

Continued.

9. ARE YOUR INTAKE SCREENING PROCEDURES CONDUCTED:

In writing with assistance from staff (a)_____
In writing without assistance from staff(b)_____
By oral interview (c)_____
Combination of writing and oral (d) _____

10. DOES YOUR INTAKE HELP YOU TO IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS BARRIERS TO STUDENTS' ATTENDING?

(a) yes ___ (b) no___ (c) not sure ____

11. WHO GATHERS THE INTAKE DATA? (a) director___ (b) teacher ____

(c) other ____ ____ _____
office assistant volunteer other staff? Please indicate.

12. WHEN DO YOU GATHER THE INTAKE DATA? (a) upon entry ____

(b) within 3 weeks____ (c) other ___

13. WHO ANALYZES THE INTAKE DATA? (a) director___ (b) teachers____

(c) assistants ____ (d) combination (Please specify: _____

II. IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING

14. How do you determine ...
(a) a student's learning preference or learning style?

(b) a student's overall academic abilities (e.g., level of proficiency in reading/writing)?

(c) when you need to have a student review and adjust goals?

Continued.

(d) which class setting (group, individual, computer-based) is best for each student?

(e) history of learning difficulties or learning disabilities?

How do you determine...

(f) the type of delivery system for your curriculum?

(1) ___ teacher discretion (2) ___ learning style results
(3) ___ funding restrictions (4) ___ combination

(g) the days and hours the program is open?

15. Do you ask about a student's... *(circle answer)*

(a) reason for attending NEVER OFTEN USUALLY

(b) educational goals NEVER OFTEN USUALLY

(c) acquaintance with others in the class
NEVER OFTEN USUALLY

(d) belief in his/her abilities
NEVER OFTEN USUALLY

(e) need for teacher attention
NEVER OFTEN USUALLY

(f) expectations about class
NEVER OFTEN USUALLY

(g) level of satisfaction with a teacher
NEVER OFTEN USUALLY

16. What kinds of procedures do you offer to encourage attendance (e.g., mentor programs)?

APPENDIX C
SURVEY OF THE NATURE OF INTAKE PROCEDURES

Continued.

17. What do you do to recognize student achievements in your program?

18. (a) When do you determine a student's need for child care or transportation so he/she can attend classes?

(b) Do you provide the child care yes _____ no _____

(c) Do you provide transportation? yes _____ no _____

19. What types of questions do you ask or how do you find out about a student's

(a) level of support from family or friends as he/she begins the program?

(b) previous educational experiences?

(c) feelings about his/her overall life successes or failures?

(d) level of self-esteem?

20. Does your program:

(a) have attendance requirements? yes_____ no _____ If so, what are they?

(b) have a waiting list? yes_____ no _____ If yes, how is it handled?

APPENDIX C
SURVEY OF THE NATURE OF INTAKE PROCEDURES

Continued.

(c) have a system for allowing a student to "stop out" for a while and then return? yes ____ no____

If so, what is the system?

(d) allow a student to continue instruction on an independent basis if the student has to "stop out?" yes____ no____

If yes, how do you do this?

(e) have a method for contacting "no shows?" yes_____ no _____
If yes, how is it handled?

(f) give homework or out of class assignments? yes _____ no _____
If yes, please give one or two examples.

21. What areas of instruction do you provide in addition to basic skills? Please check each of the areas below which you offer, and feel free to list others.

(a) _____ building self-esteem

(b) _____ being proactive or a self-advocate in life issues, such as housing, financial, health concerns

(c) _____ enhancing job skills

(d) _____ accessing area social agency services

(e) _____ learning skills

(f) _____ other areas of instruction

APPENDIX C
SURVEY OF THE NATURE OF INTAKE PROCEDURES

Continued.

22. Any other comments about your program are welcomed. Please write on the back or attach additional sheets. I am especially interested in knowing what you do to help students keep attending.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

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APPENDIX D

SURVEY QUESTION DESIGN

The survey was designed to reflect the research questions: (1) what is the nature of intake procedures, and (2) how does the intake data identify and address barriers to attendance. The questions were created for this study based on previous research (see Table 1 and Appendix A). The questions were assigned to categories of attendance barriers as defined by Sticht, McDonald & Erickson, 1998, as closely as possible (see Operational Definitions, p. 5). The number of questions for each category was determined by this researcher based on studies of successful programs in the literature review.

Section I - Identifying Data:

Questions 1 through 7 request the position of respondent, phone, e-mail, learners served in a week, estimated number of completers last year, sources of funding, and type of program.

Section II - Institutional Barriers: Questions that reflect reasons for nonattendance stemming from instructional methods, policies, practices or requirements of the program

Instructional methods:

Question 14 asks a series of open-ended questions: how the program determines a student's learning preference, a student's overall academic abilities, when there is a need to have a student review and adjust goals, which class setting (group, individual, computer-based) is best for a student, if there is a history of learning difficulties, the type of delivery system for curriculum (teacher discretion/learning style results/funding restrictions/combination), and how the program determined the days and hours of operation.

Question 21 asks what type of information is provided about issues other than basic skills instruction with closed choices, but an other is included for open-ended remarks: building self-esteem, being proactive or a self-advocate in life issues like housing, financial, or health concerns, enhancing job skills, accessing area social agency services, learning skills, or other areas of instruction.

Program policies:

Question 9 asks respondent to describe how intake screening procedures are conducted with closed choices: in writing with assistance from staff, in writing without assistance from staff, by oral interview, or a combination of writing and oral interviews.

Question 11 asks who gathers the intake data with closed choices: director, teacher, closed choice other (office assistant, volunteer, other staff).

Question 12 asks when the intake data is gathered with closed choices: upon entry, within 3 weeks, other.

Question 13 asks who analyzes the data with closed choices: director, teachers, assistants, or combination.

Question 20 asks more details about a program's design using yes or no choices, but then asks respondents to explain yes answers: are there attendance requirements

(what are they), have a waiting list system (how is it handled), have a system for allowing a student to "stop out" for a while (what is it), continue instruction on an independent basis if he/she has to stop out (how), have a system for contacting "no shows" (how is it handled), and is homework assigned (give an example).

Program practices:

Question 8 asks respondent to rank the of uses of intake data with closed choices: spotting enrollment trends, preparing funding reports, identifying student needs, staff development, determining program offerings, other.

Question 10 asks whether the intake helps to identify and address barriers with closed choices: yes, no, not sure.

Question 17 asks for an open-ended response regarding what is done to recognize achievements.

Section III - Dispositional Barriers: Questions that reflect reasons for nonattendance stemming from psychological, attitude, personality, or beliefs about ability to learn

Question 15 asks a respondent to select one choice (never, often, usually) to describe how often a program asks about or determines a student's reason for attending, educational goals, acquaintance with others in the class, belief in his/her abilities, need for teacher attention, expectations about class, and the a student's level of satisfaction with a teacher.

Question 16 is an open-ended question regarding what kinds of activities the program has to encourage attendance, and are asked to give an example.

Question 19 is an open-ended series of questions about what type of questions are asked or how a program finds out about a student's level of support from family or friends as he/she begins the program, previous educational experiences, feelings about his/her overall, not just educational, past successes or failures, and a student's level of self-esteem.

Section IV - Situational Barriers: Questions that reflect reasons for nonattendance stemming from child care issues, conflicting work schedules, or lack of transportation

Question 18 asks when a program determines a student's need for child care or transportation while they attend classes, and with yes or no choices asks if the program provides child care or transportation.

Section V - Open-responses categorized by either Research Question, and any one of the three Barriers:

Question 22 asks for any other comments about the program especially in the area of retention.

APPENDIX E
INTRODUCTORY LETTER AND INFORMED CONSENT

_____ Number
_____ I do not wish to participate.

Dear Colleague:

Most programs collect valuable information from students when they enter a program of study. As part of my research into the nature of intake procedures, you are being asked to participate in a survey project. This research is being conducted by Judy Hafley Hubble, Master's candidate, at Southwest Texas State University, Graduate School, Department of Educational Administration and Psychological Services, under the direction of Dr. Emily Miller Payne, Ed.D., Associate Professor, Developmental and Adult Education.

I anticipate that the results of this study will help you and other program directors in decision making related to intake procedures. The information collected will contribute to the knowledge base regarding current intake practices and the use of intake data in Texas.

You were selected as a potential participant because of your work with adult students in basic education. You will be one of approximately 374 participants. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire that will require approximately 30 minutes to complete. Please answer every survey question and return it in the postage-paid envelope so that your input can be included in the three week data collection interval. If you do not wish to participate in the study, please check the note above and return this cover letter. You will not be contacted again.

It is my hope to receive information from every program in order to provide a complete and representative profile. Your participation is totally voluntary, but essential. Your responses will be kept completely confidential. An identifying code on the survey will be used to record that you have responded and will then be separated from your answers. No data will be directly attributed to an individual or institution. Your returned survey indicates your willingness to participate.

Your time spent in completing this questionnaire is greatly appreciated. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the study. If you would like to receive the results of this study, e-mail me at the address below. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Judy Hafley Hubble 512/863-5143
216 Matthew-Georgetown, TX 78626
judy@austin.cc.tx.us

Dr. Emily Miller Payne, Ed.D.
Associate Professor, Developmental
Adult Education Department of
Educational Administration and
Psychological Services
Southwest Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas 78666

Continued.

Informed Consent Agreement

Project Title: The Nature of Intake Procedures as a Factor in Identifying and Addressing Barriers to Attendance for Adult Basic Education

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose of the research study:
The purpose of this study is to examine the nature of intake procedures for at risk students in Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Education Development (GED) programs.

What you will do in the study:
You will complete a survey to be returned by postal service.

Time required:
About 30 minutes.

Risks:
There are no anticipated risks.

Benefits:
There are no direct benefits to you personally for participating in this study. There are potential benefits from this study in that it will contribute to the knowledge base regarding current intake practices in Texas as well as the use of intake data.

Confidentiality:
The information that you give in this study will be handled confidentially. Your survey form will be assigned a code number on the cover sheet. Identifying information will be used for follow-up contacts for survey retrieval. The list connecting your name to the code number will be kept in a separate locked file. Identifying information on returned surveys will be separated from your answers in the final tabulations.

Voluntary Participation:
Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study:
You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Simply do not return the survey.

Payment:
You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

Who to contact if you have questions about the study:
Judy Hafley Hubble 512/863-5143
216 Matthew - Georgetown, TX 78626
Jhubble@austin.cc.tx.us

APPENDIX F
CLOSING COMMENTS REGARDING BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE

Suggestions from respondents to encourage attendance were submitted as follows:

Ideas to counter Situational Barriers:
Cooperate with local bus companies for discounts or free passes for students.

Ideas to Counter Dispositional Barriers:
Concentrate on short-term goals like passing skill level tests instead of focusing on passing GED as the only goal listed.

Have students give oral presentations about their stand on local news items to increase self-esteem.

Establish a craft time once a month to tap into multiple intelligences and promote self-esteem.

Take time out to give a lesson on how to conduct a job search to build background knowledge and boost self-esteem.

Coordinate with local providers to have a sit-down dinner at graduation time and have continuing students create decorations, make calls, develop menu, etc.

Establish a newsletter created by students that can be used as a recruiting tool, teaching lesson, and morale booster.

Make sure some lessons are arranged around current health issues to include local providers, which will empower students to seek health care.

Coordinate with local providers to take instant pictures of graduates in caps and gowns as some students may not have cameras.

Ideas to Counter Institutional Barriers:
Keep lesson time shorter for ABE students than ASE students.

Set up a formal Stop-Out Program and have volunteers grade homework lessons and monitor progress.

Vary lesson format by including local guest speakers.

Set up a separate day for orientation, ie., Mondays are the only days a student could start a program.

Arrange for home visits for pregnant women; don't just stop instruction and lessons.

Take time to set up a mentor program with local volunteers.

APPENDIX F
CLOSING COMMENTS REGARDING BARRIERS TO ATTENDANCE

Continued.

Include lessons on transition skills to higher education for upcoming graduates.

Create self-paced, or drop-in systems of study for ASE students who may not need group or one-on-one instruction as much as ABE students.

Unique Program Ideas:
A grant was obtained and a mobile lab was created in one town.

One program used international students at a local university to be tutors to ESL students in the literacy program; it helped both groups of people.

One program has several team spelling bees throughout the year with great success.

Opinions Offered Regarding the Drop Out Problem:
High drop out rates create low morale for volunteers and several respondents said they were very frustrated.

Low self-confidence in students predisposes them to dropping out when they experience a setback.

One respondent feels constant turnover in tutors, due to low pay, or no pay, creates frustration for students.

So many students seem to need help because of learning disabilities and program directors feel unable to meet their needs and this causes drop outs.

The amount of time needed to improve reading is so long that students get frustrated and drop out.

VITA

Judy Hafley Hubble was born in El Paso, Texas, on December 22, 1952, the daughter of Robert R. Brooks, and Bernadine M. Brooks. After graduating in 1970 from Mary Carroll High School, Corpus Christi, Texas, she entered the business world of banking, and commercial real estate where she was often called upon to train new employees. Building on her strengths in teaching, she entered Central Texas College, Killeen, Texas, and The University of Mary Hardin Baylor, Belton, Texas, to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree in Secondary Education in 1988. After graduating she taught in the Texas public school system for ten years.

Her love of teaching adults was fostered by teaching writing to Developmental Writing students at Central Texas College, eventually joining the CTC staff in the Student Support Services area, and later the Student Development area for Austin Community College. She entered the Graduate School of Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, in 1996, in order to continue her work with adult education.

Professionally, Judy has nurtured an interest in learning disabilities by study and attending numerous TCALD conferences. She has made presentations regarding reading strategies and learning disabilities to Adult Basic Educators of the 10-County Cooperative, San Marcos, Texas, and educators in her district.

Permanent address: 216 Matthew Lane - Georgetown, Texas 78626

This thesis was typed by the author.